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(The Scholartis Press)

# MODERN TRAVEL

AN ANTHOLOGY

Selected and Edited by

FREDERICK T. WOOD

B.A., PH.D.

*English Master at the Firth Park  
Grammar School, Sheffield*



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## PREFACE

THE field of modern travel literature is a wide one. In the period between the two wars over 8750 travel books were published in Great Britain, an average of more than four hundred each year, to say nothing of reprints or new editions of older works. All are not of equal value as contributions either to letters or to the subject with which they profess to deal. In assembling the present collection an endeavour has been made to choose extracts which seemed to have some claim to literary merit as well as a narrative or descriptive interest. Each passage is of a substantial length—an obvious advantage for a series such as this,—many different countries are represented, while the means of travel are as varied and diverse as the customs and the scenery. There are journeys on foot, by motor car, by train, by sea, by gondola, by air, and even by the Afghan *tonga*. The general plan of the book has limited the selection to a comparatively few authors and some dozen extracts, so that exclusion is not to be regarded as criticism: one well-known writer, who otherwise would certainly have found a place, has been excluded at his own wish. All the works drawn upon are easily accessible, and it is to be hoped that sufficient interest will be awakened to induce the student to read at least some of them in their entirety.

F. T. W.

SHEFFIELD  
*August 1944*

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## TRAMPING IN AMERICA

My impression of Americans from the beginning is of the best, and I have never since had cause to alter my mind. They are a kind, sympathetic race of people and naturally proud of their country. The Irish-American is inclined to be the most bitter, remembering from his youth the complaints of his parents, who were driven through unjust laws from their own beloved land ; and such a man is not to be idly aggravated, especially under the consideration that our conscience is not too clean in this respect, and that we are apt to be very slow in making that open confession which is good for the soul. The most pleasing trait in Americans, which cannot for long escape us, is their respect for women and the way in which the latter do their utmost to deserve it. No sight of a woman behind the saloon bar listening to the ribald jests of drunken men, and no woman at the bar's front drinking glass for glass with her associates. However weak in this respect a woman may be in private, she is certainly too strong to make a public exhibition of her weakness. Husband and wife may be unhappy, but you seldom hear of a woman carrying the marks of a man's brutality as witnesses against him which is so common in the police courts of old England. A man in a fit of ungovernable passion may kill his wife ; and better so, I should say, than to leave her half killed at the foot of the stairs every Saturday night and holidays for twenty or thirty years, and blacken her eyes before they can recover their natural colour, the brutality that shamed me so much in after years in the slums of London, hearing it so often recorded as a jest.

I was so anxious to see the different states of America that I did not stay long in New York before I succumbed

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to the persuasion of my Liverpool acquaintance to visit with him some friends in a small town in the state of Connecticut, at which place we soon arrived, with something like ten dollars between us. America, at this time, was suffering from a depression in trade, and people were daily returning to the old country, many of them with the intention of returning again to America at a more favourable time. Not being able to get employment at once, and resolved to be independent of the bounty of strangers, I walked out alone, and sat on a seat in the park, trying to conceive some plan for the future. My box, full of clothes, books, brushes, etc., would amply compensate, I thought, for the weekly lodging which I had had. Yes, I would see Chicago, and, suddenly becoming aware of a man occupying the other end of the seat, I inquired of him the way to Chicago, as though the distance was a paltry ten miles instead of a hundred times greater. This man looked at me in astonishment, and at last asked me if I intended to beat my way. Seeing my lack of understanding, he inquired as to my financial resources. On shaking my head in the negative, implying that I had no money, he said : " No more have I : and if you are agreeable we will both beat our way to Chicago."

This was Brum, a notorious beggar, who made himself at home in all parts of the country, from the Atlantic to the Pacific coast, and from the northern provinces of Canada to the Gulf of Mexico. The easy and sumptuous way of his catering made me indifferent to manual labour. In that country, where food was to be had for the asking, where it often went begging to be received, and people were not likely to suffer from their generosity, I became, under Brum's tutorage, a lazy wretch with but little inclination for work. Cockneys make good beggars. They are held in high esteem by the fraternity in America. Their resource, originality and invention, and a never-faltering tongue, enable

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them to often attain their ends where others fail, and they succeed where the natives starve. But my friend Brum held them in great scorn, for their methods were not his methods. Brum was a genuine beggar, who did not make flashes in the dark, having one day plenty and nothing on the next day. What he required he proceeded to beg, every morning making an inventory of his wants. Rather than wash a good handkerchief he would beg an old one that was clean, and he would without compunction discard a good shirt altogether rather than sew a button on—thus keeping up the dignity of his profession to the extreme. He scorned to carry soap, but went to a house like a Christian, and asked to be allowed to wash, with a request for warm water if the morning was cold. Begging was to him a fine art, indeed, and a delight of which he never seemed to tire. I have known him, when surfeited with an abundance of common food, such as steak, chops, etc.—to beg lozenges and sweets, complaining I suppose of throat troubles. Even in a new country like America, there are quite a number of hostile towns, owing to their lying on the main roads between large cities that are not far apart ; but Brum never seemed to fail, and would certainly never lower his dignity by complaining of difficulty. In every street, he said, there lived a good Samaritan, and seeing that a good beggar knocks at every door, he must ultimately succeed. She may live in the last house, and therefore the unsuccessful beggar, having no patience and perseverance, fails in his calling. Brum was a slow man in action and went about his business in a dogged way. And that reminds me of how this slowness of action once saved his life. We had built a camp fire in the woods, within a mile or more of a small town. Now, it was Brum's habit, before lying down for the night, to wind his handkerchief around his neck, and this he had done. Next morning I was the first to rise, and Brum, deliberately following



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my example, began in his own easy way to slow unwind this handkerchief, when to my horror a large tarantula fell from its folds. Now, had Brum been an impulsive man, no doubt the spider would have been squeezed, and would have then fastened on his nose and poisoned his blood mortally.

I was soon initiated into the mysteries of beating the way by train, which is so necessary in parts of the country, seeing the great distances between towns. Sometimes we were fortunate enough to get an empty car; sometimes we had to ride the bumpers; and often, when travelling through a hostile country, we rode on the roof of a car, so as not to give the brakeman an opportunity of striking us off the bumpers unawares. It is nothing unusual in some parts to find a man always a stranger, lying dead on the track, often cut in many pieces. At the inquest they invariably bring in a verdict of accidental death, but we know differently. Therefore we rode the car's top, so as to be at no disadvantage in a struggle. The brakeman, knowing well that our fall would be his own, would not be too eager to commence hostilities. Sometimes we were desperate enough to ride the narrow iron rods, which were under the car, and only a few feet from the track. This required some nerve, for it was not only uncomfortable but the train, being so near the line, seemed to be running at a reckless and uncontrollable speed, whereas when riding on the car's top, a much faster train seemed to be running much slower and far more smooth and safe. Sometimes we were forced to jump off a moving train at the point of a revolver. At other times the brakemen were friendly, and even offered assistance in the way of food, drink or tobacco. Again, when no firearm was in evidence, we had to threaten the brakeman with death if he interfered with us. In this way Brum and myself travelled the States of America, sleeping at night by camp fires, and taking temporary possession of empty houses

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One night, when darkness had overtaken us, before we could find a fit and comfortable place for camping, we spied a house, and seeing no light in the window, presumed it to be unoccupied. We knocked at the door, and the hollow sound which followed convinced us that no living person was then on the premises. When we lifted the latch and entered we were surprised to see chairs, a table and various articles of domestic utility scattered in confusion on the floor. In spite of this we proceeded to make ourselves easy for the night, and coming out again began to feel in the darkness for wood. Being successful in our search we returned and made a fire, and there we slept until morning. As usual, I was the first to rise on the following day, and went forth in quest of water to make our breakfast coffee. This I soon found, and was bearing it along, when my attention was drawn to a board nailed to the front of the house. There I saw the letters "Haunted," painted large, and ragged, as though by a hand that had shaken with fear. If we had seen this board on the night previous, no doubt we would have hurried on in dread of our lives; but as it was, we made our coffee and laughed heartily in the daylight. At this time I took a notion to work for a few days, but Brum showed his grinning face so often that I grew ashamed of him and discharged myself. He seemed to have taken a strange liking to me, and would not leave me, but swore that not even for my sake would he become a working man.

Brum was a man of an original turn of mind and his ideas were often at variance with others. For instance, all tramps in America travel on the railroad, whether they walk or take free rides. Therefore it seems reasonable to infer that the people who live on the outskirts of a town, being farthest from the track, would be more in sympathy with tramps, for they would see and hear

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less of them. But Brum laughed at this idea, claimed that his own success was through being different mind. "For," said he, "as all tramps of that opinion, therefore the outskirts are begged much and the centre of the town too little. For instance," he continued, "here is the railroad depot with its restaurant; now, not one tramp in a hundred would visit such a place, for it is on their direct route and they believe that it receives far too many applications. This opinion, being so common, must prove it to be false. However, we will test it and see." Saying so, Brum boldly entered the restaurant, leaving me to wait outside. It was a considerable time before he appeared, and I began to think that he was being supplied with a meal on the premises, but at last he came, carrying in his hand a large paper parcel. "This place is as good as gold," said he, "for here we can get a day's provisions for two. Take it down the track to that clump of woods," said he, "for the waiter promises that did I bring a jug or can he would supply me with hot coffee." I started at once towards the woods with this bag, the weight of which proved the presence of either much meat or pudding; while Brum made his way to a small house near the railroad to see if he could borrow a can. It was not long after this when we were seated in the shady green wood with the contents of this parcel before us, which were found to consist of a number of chops, bread and butter, some potatoes and cake. These, with a quart or more of good hot coffee, made such a meal as a working man could only reasonably expect once a week—the day being Sunday.

One of Brum's peculiarities was, on approaching a new town, to look out for a church steeple with a cross which denoted a Catholic church, and therefore a Catholic community. Making his way in the direction of that cross he would begin operations in its surround-

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ing streets, "and," said he, "if I fail in that portion of the town, I shall certainly not succeed elsewhere."

I shall never forget the happy summer months I spent with Brum at the seaside. Some of the rich merchants there could not spare more than a month or six weeks from business, but, thanks be to Providence, the whole summer was at our disposal. If we grew tired of one town, or, as was more often the case, the town grew tired of us, we would saunter leisurely to the next one and again pitch our camp; so on, from place to place, during the summer months. We moved freely among the visitors, who apparently held us in great respect, for they did not address us familiarly, but contented themselves with staring at a distance. We lay across their runs on the sands and their paths in the woods; we monopolised their nooks in the rocks and took possession of caves, and not a murmur heard, except from the sea, which of a certainty could not be laid to our account. No doubt detectives were in these places, but they were on the look-out for pickpockets, burglars and swindlers; and, seeing that neither the visitors nor the boarding-house keepers made any complaint, these detectives did not think it worth while to arrest tramps; for there was no promotion to be had by doing so. "Ah," I said to Brum, as we sat in a shady place, eating a large custard pudding from a boarding-house, using for the purpose two self-made spoons of wood—"Ah, we would not be so pleasantly occupied as tramps in England. We would there receive tickets for soup; soup that could be taken without spoons; no pleasant picking of the teeth after eating; no sign of a pea, onion or carrot; no sign of anything, except flies." Two-thirds of a large custard pudding between two of us, and if there was one fault to be found with it, it was its being made with too many eggs. Even Brum was surprised at his success on this occasion. "Although," as he said, "she being a fat lady, I expected something

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unusual." Brum had a great admiration for fat women, not so much, I believe, as his particular type of beauty, but for the good-natured qualities he claimed corpulence denoted. "How can you expect those skinny creatures to sympathise with another when they half starve their own bodies?" he asked. He often descanted on excellencies of the fat, to the detriment of the thin, and I never yet heard another beggar disagree with him.

After seeing Brum wash the dish, and wipe it with his pocket-handkerchief, with a care that almost amounted to reverence, and trusting in my own misanthropy that the good lady would have the thought and precaution to wash it again—I settled to a short nap, until Brum's return. For there was no knowing how long he might be away; he might take a notion to beg for a shirt, a pair of trousers or shoes, or anything else that came to his mind.

Now, when Brum left, he had on a dark shirt, but he was so accustomed to seeing him change his appearance with a fresh coat, or a different-shaped hat, that I was not at all surprised on waking to see him sitting before me in a clean white shirt with a starched front. I said nothing about this change, and he was too good a beggar to give unsolicited information, which would look too much like boasting of his own exploits. That he had met another of his favourite fat ladies, or perhaps the same one had added to her kindness, there was not the least doubt.

Brum's first words rather startled me, for he continued the conversation from the place I left off previously to my sleep. "When I was in England," he began, "I did not experience such hardship as is commonly supposed to exist. Beggars there, as here, choose the wrong places, and not one in three knows which are the best." "Surely," I said, "a good clean street and houses with respectable fronts, of moderate size, and kept by the better class mechanics, are the best?"

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“ And so they would be,” he answered, “ if every beggar did not think so. But let me tell you, for your benefit if ever stranded in England, the best places for beggars to operate.” How I learned the truth of his wise teaching in after days ! Every fine-looking street you chance upon, pass it ; but every little court or blind alley you come across, take possession without delay, especially if its entrance is under an arch, which hides the approach to the houses, making them invisible from the street. Such little out-of-the-way places are not only more profitable than good streets, but are comparatively safe where the police are unusually severe. Then again you should avoid every town that has not either a mill, a factory or a brewery ; old-fashioned towns, quiet and without working people—except a few gardeners, coachmen, domestic servants, etc. ; such places where you see a sign at the free libraries warning tramps not to enter, and every plot of land has its sign—“ Beware of the Dog.” In towns where working men are numerous, and the idle rich are few, such signs are not to be seen. “ Of course,” he continued, “ your object in England must be money, for you cannot expect to get meat, cake and custard pudding in a land where even the rich live poorer, with regards to diet, than the labouring classes of this country.” I remembered these wise thoughts of Brum, uttered on the shores of the Atlantic, and if I did not profit much by them in my own experience in England, I certainly made enough attempts to test their truth. I always kept a keen eye for blind alleys, and quiet courts under arches, and I invariably came out of one richer than I went in. And what nice quiet places they are for drinking cups of tea on a doorstep, with only a neighbour or two to see you, and perhaps thousands of people passing to and fro in the streets at the other side of the arch. There is no thoroughfare for horses and carts ; no short cut for business men, and the truth of the matter is that a

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number of the inhabitants themselves, born and bred in the town, know not of the existence of such places and others, knowing them, would be ashamed to confer their acquaintance with them. But Brum knew where to find the kindest hearts in England, not in the fashionable streets and new villas, but in the poor little whitewashed houses in courts and alleys.

We were determined to be in the fashion, and to visit the various delightful watering-places on Long Island Sound. Of course it would be necessary to combine business with pleasure, and pursue our calling as beggars. With the exception of begging our food, which would not be difficult, seeing that the boarding-houses were full, and that large quantities of good stuff were being made, there was no reason why we should not get much enjoyment out of life as the summer visitors. We would share with them the same sun and breeze; we could dip in the surf at our own pleasure, and during the heat of the day we could stretch our limbs in the green shade, or in the shadow of some large rock that overlooked the Sound. However, we could no longer stand the sultry heat of New York, where we had been for several days, during which time we had been groaning and gasping for air. So I and Brum started out of the City, on the way towards Hartford, Connecticut, with the intention of walking no more than six miles a day along the sea coast. What a glorious time we had! The people catered for us as though we were the poorest tramps in the whole world, and as if they considered it providential that we should call at their houses for assistance. The usual order of things changed considerably. Cake—which we had hitherto considered a luxury—became at this time our common food, as we were at last compelled to install plain bread as cheap as butter as the luxury, preferring it before the finest sponge-cake flavoured with spices and eggs. Free

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water springs were numerous, gushing joyously out of the rocks, or lying quiet in shady nooks ; and there was many a tramp's camp, with tin cans ready to hand, where we could make our coffee and consume the contents of paper bags. This part of the country was also exceptionally good for clothes. Summer boarders often left clothes behind, and of what use were they to the landladies, for no rag-and-bone man ever called at their houses. The truth of the matter was that in less than a week I was well dressed from head to foot, all of these things being voluntary offerings, when in quest of eatables. Brum, of course, had fared likewise, but still retained the same pair of dungarees, which he swore he would not discard except at the instance of a brand new pair of tweeds. It was this pair of working man's trousers which had caused a most regrettable mistake. We had just finished begging at one of these small watering-places and, loaded with booty, were on our way in the direction of the camp which, Brum informed me, was half a mile north of the town. When we reached this camp we found it occupied by one man, who had just then made his coffee and was about to eat. On which Brum asked this man's permission to use his fire, which would save us the trouble of making one of our own. The stranger gave a reluctant consent, and at the same time moved some distance away, as though he did not wish further intimacy. While we were gathering wood and filling our cans at the spring, I could not help but see this stranger glaring hatefully at my companion's trousers, and expected every moment to hear some insulting remark. At last we were ready and Brum proceeded to unload himself. He had eight or nine parcels of food distributed about his clothes, but in such a way that no one could be the wiser. It was then that I noted a change come over the stranger's face, who, seeing the parcels, seemed to be smitten with remorse. In another moment he was on his feet and



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coming towards us said impulsively—"Excuse me, but for not giving you a more hearty welcome, but really—glancing again at my companion's trousers—I thought you were working men, but I now see that you are true beggars." Brum laughed at this, and mentioned that others had also been deceived. He explained that the said trousers had been given him against his wish, but on seeing that they were good and were likely to outlast several pairs of cloth, he had resolved to stick to them for another month or two. "I regret having had such an opinion of you," said the stranger, in a choking voice, "and trust, boys, that you will forgive me." Thus ended in a friendly spirit what promised at first to become very unpleasant.

This stranger turned out to be New Haven Baldy. We had never had the pleasure of meeting him before, but had often heard of him. He had a great reputation in the State of Connecticut, which he never left except for an annual trip through Massachusetts to the city of Boston. There was not one good house in the former State that was not known to Baldy. This was put to the test in our presence, that very day. A man came to the camp who, poor fellow, claimed to be a hard-working man. He had lost his job and been robbed of his savings, now being forced to walk home to Meridan. He had never begged in his life, and he was now been without food for two days, and was almost too weak to continue his journey. "Yes," said Baldy, "and when you are settled at home, and the wrinkles are taken out of you, what sympathy will you have with us? You will tell us to go and work for our living the same as yourself." The poor fellow protested, saying that he had never known his mother to refuse a man food. At this Baldy pricked up his ears and inquired of the stranger his mother's address. On hearing the name of the street, Baldy at once proceeded to describe the one—and only one—good house to be found

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there. "That is our house," said the stranger. Baldy, not yet convinced, asked for a description of the old lady and her husband. This was given, to Baldy's satisfaction. "Well," said he, "I have had many a meal at your house, and you shall now have one with me." Saying which he gave the stranger a parcel which, being spread on the grass, was seen to contain several meat sandwiches and a number of small cakes. After eating these, and others from Brum, the stranger left, saying that he would not again feel hungry until he reached home.

After the stranger had gone Baldy laughed immoderately. "That man's father," said he, "was a railroad man, who became a boss, and at last retired on a comfortable little sum. In the kitchen, where the old people have often fed me, the old man has hung on the wall the shovel which he had used in his early days. There it is to be seen tasselled and kept shining bright, and treated reverently as a family heirloom. How I have laughed," continued Baldy, "to see that shovel, to think what a simple old fellow he must be to take a pride in showing how he toiled in his early life. Every time I go there the old man points at the shovel with pride, and I have as much as I can do to keep a calm face in listening to its history. But in spite of all that the old man is a good sort, and I am glad to have been able to assist his son."

Alas, what a disastrous end was ours! When we reached the town of New Haven, we began to beg from passers-by in the open streets and in less than an hour were in jail. On being brought up next morning before the judge, we were each sentenced to thirty days. But what hurt our feelings most was the personal comment of the judge—that we were two brawny scoundrels who would not work if we had the chance. However true this might be as applied to us in a moral sense, it certainly was not a literal fact, for we were both small men.

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People who, not seeing us, would read this remark in the local paper, would be misled as to our personal appearance. I am doubtful whether any judge is justified in using such a term. At any rate, thirty days had to be served.

We were in a far better position than an Italian who was waiting to be tried for murder, and whose cell was not far distant from ours.

At this jail we had to perform the light labour of caning chairs, and were well treated in the way of food and sleeping accommodation and, in addition, received a liberal supply of chewing tobacco.

Being interested in the Italian, the first thing we did on regaining our liberty was to inquire as to his fate. We were told that he had received a life sentence ; and as our alien informant strangely expressed it—"Anton he didn't get some of de time, but he got all of de time."

Thus what promised to be a summer's outing full of enjoyment, came to be a disastrous close sooner than we expected. And, when we were again free, the summer season was practically over, the visitors were gradually leaving for their town houses ; which meant that our treatment at the boarding-houses would become colder and colder in accordance with the number of boarders.

At this time I accepted employment as a wood-chopper, but unfortunately the work did not last ; and just as I began to feel the inclination for this more respectable life, I was discharged, much to Bruner's delight, who was apparently disgusted with this new innovation called work, and could not understand a man's desire for it.

W. H. DAVIES,  
*The Autobiography of a Super-Tramp* (1908)

## TO THE WEST RIDING

### TO THE WEST RIDING

ONCE again I had to abandon the route I had originally planned. I had promised to attend the first re-union dinner of my old Kitchener's Army battalion, which was to take place in my native city, Bradford. So there was nothing for it but to visit the West Riding next, leaving the still unvisited Potteries behind. This time I travelled from Nottingham to Yorkshire in my own car, being carried there like a precious parcel in a glass case. I used to drive myself, but have given it up these last few years, not because I think myself too important to change my own gears, but simply because I am a very bad driver. People who are downright bad drivers should not handle a motor these days, when the roads are so crowded and dangerous. They are a menace to other persons as well as to themselves. I think—as you are probably thinking—that it is disgraceful that a large adult male should not be able to drive a car decently. (My own trouble is that I become absent-minded at the wheel and am not able to act quickly. The result is that I run into things. Indeed, there are few things commonly met with on the road that I have not bumped in my time.) But it is still more disgraceful not to admit your incompetence, to go on driving when you know in your heart of hearts that at any minute you may turn into a dangerous nuisance. Spend an hour on any road and you will see that there are any number of shockingly bad drivers about ; but how often do you meet a man who can drive, and has driven for some time, but who admits that he is a bungler and a menace? I have met men who have never tried at all, and do not intend to try. But if a man has ever handled a car for a year or two, he will not admit that he is anything but supremely efficient. So they go on—as the statistics of killed and injured show us—dealing

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death in their vanity. There are of course various ways of making the roads safer ; but not the least important of them is a wholesale dismissal of bad drivers ; probably about one in every three motorists who now career up and down the country.

The early afternoon, sunny but not warm, found us well outside Nottingham and making for Chesterfield. Somewhere about half-way we passed through the main street of a very small town, and each side of this street was lined with folk, old and young, who were all looking in one direction. Possibly there was a big funeral or perhaps a wedding among the notables, but there was no sign of either, and the staring crowd gave us no clue. It was very odd and rather disquietening to see all those faces and not to know what was the matter. It was as if we were not really there or alternatively as if we had gone rushing on into some mad England, not on the map. To travel swiftly in a closed car, as so many of us do nowadays, is of course to cut oneself off from the sane reality of the regions one passes through perhaps from any sane reality at all. Whole leagues of countryside are only a roar and muddle outside the windows, and villages are only like brick-coloured bubbles that we burst as we pass. Their life is temporarily as remote as the moon. For all I know, those staring people in the little town may have been expecting the signal for the world's end or the Second Coming. Their lives may have been so curiously transformed that my chauffeur and I and our machine were not present to their minds. Perhaps if we had stopped and got out, we might not have been able to hold any communication with them. All this is not mere fancifulness, a literary gent having his fun. Our new, rapid, closed-in sort of travel has its sinister aspects, and here is one of them. When people moved slowly in their travel there was time to establish proper communications with what was strange, to absorb, to adjust oneself. Now

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that we are whizzed about the world, there is no time for absorbing and adjusting. Perhaps it is for this reason that the world that the traveller knows is beginning to show less and less variety. By the time we can travel at four hundred miles an hour we shall probably move over a dead uniformity, so that the bit of reality we left at one end of a journey is twin to the bit of reality we step into at the other end. Indeed, by that time there will be movement, but, strictly speaking, no more travel.

The fancy that we might be rushing on into some strange mad England, inspired by the sight of those staring people, returned to me a little later when we reached Chesterfield. I have often noticed its famous crooked spire from the train, but had never been so close to it before. It was startling. To begin with, it was much bigger than I had imagined it to be ; actually it is 230 feet high. Then again it is most grotesquely warped, twisted, crooked ; the oddest, drollest tower in the country. It dominated the town and its narrow streets, but only in its own queer fashion, like an enormous antique jest set for ever in the skies. The people who live in its shadow ought to be folks out of the common. They ought to go careering about like the elvish burghers and peasants in old Breughel's enchanting pictures. They ought to be humorists. Every time the morning papers arrive in Chesterfield roars of laughter ought to ascend to that black barley-sugar stick of a spire. For a moment I thought there was an air of cheerful madness about the whole place, welcomed it, and said to myself that England ought to be filled with such fantastic pieces of architecture, to match its fantastic characters and books. Just as there is a grimly sane England that is really lunatic, so too there ought to be, on a big scale, an apparently mad England, with towers all awry, that is really sane and sweet, like some of Shakespeare's comedies. Probably the old citizens

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of Chesterfield were annoyed when they saw what happened when you build a lofty spire of wood and lead and do not use properly seasoned timber. But if they are not proud and fond of their spire now, they are poor creatures. Warped minds and hearts, these are our trouble, not warped spires. It does not matter into what twisted folly the architecture breaks so long as we can live merrily and affectionately beneath it. And the more I see of this country the more firmly am I convinced that it is not its cheerful fools but its grimly practical hard-headed men who have always been its chief source of danger. With that mad spire to live under, Chesterfield ought never to have been allowed to enter industry ; it should never have passed a dividend, never come within sight of double-entry book-keeping ; but ought to have been kept as a Derbyshire stronghold of cheerful English eccentricity, a fortress of pleasant folly, a last refuge for Cousin Silence, My Uncle Toby, and Mr. Micawber.

Between Chesterfield and Sheffield, where the fields are preserved in the place-names and hardly anywhere else, the countryside looked very queer. Industrial man and Nature sing a rum sort of duet in those parts. I saw a row of sharply conical little hills that looked like a topographical freak until I came close to them and then realised that they were old slag-heaps now almost entirely covered with grass. Further on we passed a hill that might have been brought from some other planet. It was black where the low rays of the sun were not faintly gilding it, and was everywhere deeply scarred and seamed. Not even passing through mountainous Nevada, where the landscape is only so much geology, have I seen so strange and desolate a hill as this ; only of course Nature had not been at work here for this was really a colossal slag-heap, the biggest I have ever seen. We were now drawing near to Sheffield. There was some fine high country on the left, good

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Pennine stuff. The sun was low but still shining strongly and, with the increasing smokiness of the air, it made a strange chiaroscuro, as Northern as high tea and the proper short "a" sound. For one minute Sheffield, far below, looked like the interior of an active volcano. The road ran along a ridge. Down below, on the left, were rows and rows of little houses, acres of slanting and gleaming slates. We ran under the murky canopy and were in Sheffield. The smoke was so thick that it made a foggy twilight in the descending streets, which appeared as if they would end in the steaming bowels of the earth. In the centre of the city was a large new white building that threw into darker relief its older neighbours. We were now in the true North country. One glance at the people, with their stocky figures and broad faces, humorous or pugnacious, told you that. On the road to Barnsley the stone walls began, settling any possible doubts. The North of England is the region of stone walls. They run from the edges of the towns to the highest and wildest places on the moors, firmly binding the landscape. You never see anybody building them or even repairing them, but there they are, unbroken and continuous from every tram terminus to the last wilderness of bog and cloud. No slope is too steep for them. No place is too remote. They will accurately define pieces of ground that do not even know a rabbit and only hear the cry of the curlews. Who built these walls, why they were ever thought worth building, these are mysteries to me. But when I see them, I know that I am home again ; and no landscape looks quite right to me without them. If there are not a few thousand leagues of them framing the bright fields of asphodel, it will be no Elysium for me.

Along this road to Barnsley the sun flared hugely before finally setting. All the western edges of the slag-heaps were glittering. I saw in one place a great cloud of steam that had plumes of gold. In another,



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we passed under a vast aerial flight of coal truck slowly moving, in deep black silhouette, against the sunset. It would not have made a bad symbolic picture of the end of one phase of industrial England. When we looked down upon Barnsley, we saw it for a moment dimly ranged about an ebony pyramid of slag. When we stopped in the town for tea, the sun had gone and the air was nippingly cold. In the café where I ate my toasted tea-cake, a young man was being funny to his girl about somebody's bad elocution. (I suspect that the somebody was a local big-wig.) "He said 'lor' for 'law,'" said the young man, "and 'dror' for 'draw.' Honestly he did. 'We will now dror to a conclusion,' he said. Yes, really." And as they were in that stage of courtship in which each finds the other's least remark a miracle of apt speech, they were very happy, two refined but humorous souls in a wilderness of clods. It was almost dark when we left Barnsley for Huddersfield. The hills were now solidly black, their edges very sharp against the last faint silver of the day. They were beginning to take on, for me, the Wordsworthian quality which belongs to the North. The factories might be roaring and steaming in the valleys, their lighted windows glaring at us as we passed, but behind were those high remote skylines, stern enough and yet still suggesting to me a brooding tenderness :—

"The silence that is in the starry sky,  
The sleep that is among the lonely hills."

A road well lighted and of immense width led us into Huddersfield, which is not a handsome town but yet is famous in these parts for the intelligence and independence of its citizens. Whether they really deserve this reputation, I have never been able to discover, though I know the place fairly well. We climbed from Huddersfield, on our way to Bradford, to the heights of Shelley

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The familiar nocturnal pageant of the West Riding was all round us. This is the region of mountaineering trams ; you see them far away at night, climbing the hills, like luminous beetles. You will go through mile after mile of streets, climbing all the time, and then suddenly arrive at a stretch of open country that seems nearly as wild and cold as Greenland. From such heights you look across at hills that are constellated and twinkling with street lamps. If the towns in the West Riding were as brilliantly illuminated as Los Angeles, they would run excursions from London so that people could see these patterned hills at night. Even as it is, the spectacle has a never-failing charm. We ran down from Shelf, which is a place as mysterious to me as it probably is to you, into the centre of Bradford, then climbed another hill and reached our destination. I was back in my old home, and, journey or no journey, there I intended to stay for the next six or seven days.

Perhaps I should never have included Bradford in this itinerary. Obviously I cannot visit it in the same spirit in which I visit the other places. I am not merely returning to a city I know well, but to my childhood and youth. I left Bradford in September 1914, and have never lived in it, only stayed in it, since then. I have probably got just the wrong amount of knowledge of it now, being neither a citizen nor a complete stranger. I had better apologise now for everything that follows in this chapter. Nevertheless, I am determined to write it. This record would not be complete if there was not some such visit as this set down in it. I am not a citizen of this city, the Bradford of 1933. My Bradford ended in 1914. This must necessarily be a tale of two cities. They have much in common, and youthful memory may seize too eagerly upon what had been brought from that earlier Bradford ; but I could not ignore the differences even if I wanted to do so. I have changed, of course ; but I think the place itself has changed even

more than I have. And I am not thinking now of those inevitable alterations in the appearance of a large town—the new streets where once there were old pubs and shops; the miles of semi-detached villas where once rolled among the gigantic buttercups and daisies. These changes are more significant. A sight of them here may give us a glimpse of two Englands, two worlds.

Bradford is one of those cities and towns that are products of nineteenth-century Industrialism. In 1801 it had a population of about 130,000. In 1901 it had a population of about 280,000. (The only town in the country that grew faster was Middlesbrough.) It was very fortunately placed for its own staple trade of worsted and woollen manufacturing. I was near some large coal-fields, and what was even more important, it had an excellent supply of soft water free from lime, good for both washing wool and dyeing it. All the processes of worsted manufacture—combing, spinning, weaving, dyeing and finishing—are carried on in Bradford. It also deals in alpaca, mohair and silk. Indeed, there is nothing that can be spun and woven that does not come to Bradford. I remember myself as a boy, seeing there some samples of human hair that had been sent from China: they were pigtails that had been cut off by Imperial command. And there used to be one factory in Bradford that specialised in dolls' hair, those crisp curls you find in the nursery cupboard. When I was a rebellious lad, I used to think that a wool office—and I was sent to one for a season—was the very symbol of the prosaic; but now I see that I was wrong. Revisiting them again, I saw that these offices, with their bins of samples, blue-wrapped cylinders of hair, are really romantic. Take down some of those greasy or dusty samples and you bring the ends of the earth together. This wool was lately wandering about on our own South Downs. This comes from the Argentine, this from Australia. The dust and dried

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ding that falls out of this packet comes from the desert. Here, in this blue paper, is hair clipped from the belly of a camel. These wools and hairs will be sorted, scoured, combed, the long strands forming Tops, the short Noils, and Tops and Noils, if they are not used locally, may be exported all over the place, from Finland to Spain. What they will end as, God only knows. Their adventures are terrific. Do the Bradford wool men, with their broad faces and loud voices, ever think about these things? I fancy they do, but they never mention them in public. Their talk is all of prices. You might think, to hear them, that they cared for nothing but "t' brass." Don't you believe them.

It was after 1830 that Bradford began growing rapidly and piling up wealth. Apart from its natural advantages and the general state of trade, there was another reason for this, and that is that during the early and mid-Victorian periods, a number of German and German-Jewish merchants, with German banks behind them, came to settle in the town. Many of these merchants were men of liberal opinions, who knew they could be happier outside Germany. The results of this friendly invasion were very curious. Bradford became—as it still remained when I was a boy there—at once one of the most provincial and yet one of the most cosmopolitan of English provincial cities. Its provincialism was largely due to its geographical situation. It is really in a back-water. The railway main lines went to Leeds, ten miles away, and not to Bradford, with the result that Leeds, though it has never had the world-wide reputation of Bradford, is a larger city and of much great local importance. It was Leeds, and not Bradford, that became the great marketing centre of West and Mid-Yorkshire. Leeds has a university and law courts; Bradford has not. I have always thought that there must be proportionately fewer university graduates in Bradford than in any other large

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town in England. Then again, the wool business was so much a local trade that a man might spend all his life in it, unless he happened to be sent out buying or selling, and never meet anybody but his neighbours. A city that has mixed trades will probably have some of its corners rubbed off; it must work with other places but Bradford, with its one trade, was all corners, hard provincial angles. There was no mistaking a Bradford man. Moreover, Bradford was, and still is, on the edge of the moors, hardly more than a tram-ride from wild Pennine country. A man might spend his mornings in the Wool Exchange and then spend his evenings among moorland folk, who would not do badly as characters in the medieval Wakefield Nativity Play. Wuthering Heights are only just round the corner. The town did not gently fade away into regions decorated by landed proprietors and gentleman farmers. John Ball's old gibe, "When Adam delved and Eve span, Who was then the gentleman?" had no application to Bradford, where everybody was busy spinning. A few were rich, and a great many were very poor, working from morning until night for miserable wages; but they were all one lot of folk, and Jack not only thought himself as good as his master but very often told him so. Bradford was not only provincial but also fiercely democratic. (The Independent Labour Party was born there.) If, having made some big lucky gambles in wool, you made a fortune there and determined to retire and set up as an English gentleman, you never stayed in Bradford, where everybody was liable to be very sardonic at your expense; but bought an estate a long way off, preferably in the South.

Yet at the same time—and this is what gives the place its odd quality—Bradford was always a city of travellers. Some of its citizens went regularly to the other side of the globe to buy wool. Others went abroad, from Belgium to China, selling yarn and pieces. They

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returned to Market Street, the same sturdy Bradfordians from the ends of the earth. You used to meet men who did not look as if they had ever been further than York or Morecambe, but who actually knew every Continental express. They would go away for months, keeping to the most complicated time-tables. When they returned they did not give themselves cosmopolitan airs ; it was very dangerous in Bradford to give yourself any airs, except those by tradition associated with solid wool men. And then there was this curious leaven of intelligent aliens, chiefly German-Jews and mostly affluent. They were so much a part of the place when I was a boy that it never occurred to me to ask why they were there. I saw their outlandish names on office doors, knew that they lived in certain pleasant suburbs, and obscurely felt that they had always been with us and would always remain. That small colony of foreign or mixed Bradfordians produced some men of great distinction, including a famous composer, two renowned painters, and a well-known poet. (In Humbert Wolfe's *Now a Stranger* you get a glimpse of what life was like in that colony for at least one small boy.) I can remember when one of the best-known clubs in Bradford was the *Schillerverein*. And in those days a Londoner was a stranger sight than a German. There was, then, this odd mixture in pre-war Bradford. A dash of the Rhine and the Oder found its way into our grim runnel—"t' mucky beck." Bradford was determinedly Yorkshire and provincial, yet some of its suburbs reached as far as Frankfort and Leipzig. It was odd enough. But it worked.

The war changed all that. There is hardly a trace now in the city of that German-Jewish invasion. Some of the merchanting houses changed their names and personnel ; others went out of business. I liked the city better as it was before, and most of my fellow-Bradfordians agree with me. It seems smaller and

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duller now. I am not suggesting that these German-Jews were better men than we are. The point is that they were different, and brought more to the city than bank drafts and lists of customers. They acted as a leaven, just as a colony of typical West Riding folk would act as a leaven in Munich or Moscow. These exchanges are good for everybody. Just lately, when we offered hospitality to some distinguished German-Jews who had been exiled by the Nazis, the leader-writers in the cheap Press began yelping again about Keeping the Foreigner Out. Apart from the miserable meanness of the attitude itself—for the great England, the England admired throughout the world, is the England that keeps open house, the refuge of Mazzini, Marx, Lenin—history shows us that the countries that have opened their doors have gained, just as the countries that have driven out large numbers of citizens, for racial, religious or political reasons, have always paid dearly for their intolerance. It is one of the innumerable disadvantages of this present age of idiotic nationalism, political and economic, this age of passports and visas and quotas, when every country is as difficult to enter or leave as was the Czar's Russia or the Sultan's Turkey before the war, that it is no longer possible for this admirable leavening process to continue. Bradford is really more provincial now than it was twenty years ago. But so, I suspect, is the whole world. It must be when there is less and less tolerance in it, less free speech, less liberalism. Behind all the new movements of this age, nationalistic, fascistic, communistic, has been more than a suspicion of the mental attitude of a gang of small town louts ready to throw a brick at the nearest stranger.

But our theme is Bradford. Not only have nearly all the big merchanting houses disappeared but a great many of the English firms too. Wool merchants, whose names seemed to us like the Bank of England,

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have vanished. Not one or two of them, but dozens of them. The great slump swept them away. Some of them, of course, had made fortunes before then. There were fortunes to be made in the West Riding during and just after the war. The money rolled in. I think this short period of artificial prosperity confused many people's ideas of trade. They thought, and still think, it represented some form of trading. When the slump came, many of them sat about, not bothering much and telling one another that there had been bad times before. I am no economist, but it is obvious even to me that this notion of there being a normal standard of trade is fallacious and dangerous. The situation is not merely changing temporarily all the time; it is also changing for ever. A set of conditions cannot exactly repeat themselves. The export trade of such places as Bradford was declining long before the war. We used to sell textile machinery to other countries and send out managers and mechanics with those machines. You cannot expect to teach other people to make goods and then expect them to go on still buying those goods from you. The war was a sharp break in this process of decline, a brief golden age of profits. Then reality broke in again in the early nineteen-twenties. The export trade, dependent on countries that had not the money to spend, rapidly dwindled. The very tide of fashion turned against the West Riding, which was still making solid fabrics for a world that wanted flimsy ones. Prices sank lower and lower. One firm after another staggered and then crashed. The raw wool business had always been a bit of gamble, but now it was a gamble at which you could not win. The wool trade suffered a great purge. The first to be swept away were the crowds of middle-men, who had been earning a living—and a very easy living—for years. Even when I was a boy, it had struck me that these gentry, with their one little room somewhere, their solitary clerk or



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typist, their hours of lounging in the cafés, playing dominoes or chess, had a remarkably easy time of it that they had escaped very conveniently from the curse of Adam. I used to know dozens of them, and a very nice life they led, with the maximum of freedom and the minimum of responsibility. The air was fragrant with the latakia and old virginia in their pipes. But not now. That fairy tale of trade had been rudely concluded. Those swarms of genial smoky parasites have gone. At the time of writing the wool trade is better than it has been for several years, but now it is a different wool trade, with none of that easy gambling and genial acceptance of good times and bad times. They snatch at every crumb of business. Every man has to do not only a day's work but a very canny day's work, using his wits all the time.

Everybody in the business I talked to confirmed this change. It was no longer the wool trade that I had known. "And mind you, lad," said one old merchant "they're beginning to say Bradford's making money again. It's doing nowt o' t' sort. What bit o' money is being made's going to t' banks. It's banks 'at's making money." They are not enthusiastic about the banking system in these parts, for in a world demanding long credits, they say that the banks will give them no rope at all except the rope with which to hang themselves. The men who are managing to hold their own in this new and keenly competitive age are different from the old wool men. They are not such tremendous "characters," but, on the other hand, they are something more than lucky gamblers. They have to have a good many solid qualifications. I am thinking now of several men in their forties who have decent positions in the trade, chiefly on the export side. Let me make a tiny composite sketch of them. He is managing a firm, and therefore has under him various buyers, travellers, clerks, warehousemen. He has to have a

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good knowledge of raw wool, tops and noils, and there is a great deal to know about these commodities. Probably his knowledge was acquired in the first place from a course or two at the Technical College and then improved, and vastly improved, by practical experience. He probably knows German, French and some Spanish or Italian. He has to know something about the relative cheapness and efficiency of various methods of transport, shipping and railway lines, road and canal. He has to know something about finance, about drafts and bills from Gothenburg, Warsaw or Barcelona. And all the time he must watch the market, which is never still and never reliable. In my opinion he earns his money. And you can safely bet that his wife, unless she is unlucky, earns hers too. For she probably has only one maid or a daily woman, to help with the rough work, and yet not only keeps the house clean and comfortable and looks after the children, but carries on the Yorkshire housewife's tradition of cooking and baking everything (including the bread) herself. Unlike her mother, who probably did all this but tended to let the house and its work and worries crush and age her, she will probably keep herself smart and pretty and reasonably well-informed and be ready to join her husband at cards or golf or whatever pastime he favours. These two seem to me good citizens; and there are plenty of them, known to me by name, in the West Riding.

The re-union battalion dinner, which had brought me here when I ought to have been continuing my journey elsewhere, was held at a tavern on Saturday night. The battalion was the 10th Duke of Wellington's, of the 23rd Division, which did good work in France and then in the later stage of the war did equally good work on the Italian Front. It was not specifically a Bradford battalion. Most of the fellows I had known

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as a boy had not belonged to it, but had joined a Bradford "Pals" battalion that had been formed rather later. There were a number of these "Pals" battalions, and as a rule the young men in them were well above the average in intelligence, physique and enthusiasm. They were all sent to the attack on the Somme on July 1, 1916, when they were butchered with remarkable efficiency. I spent my boyhood in a rapidly growing suburb of Bradford, and there was a gang of us there, lads who played football together, went "chumping" (*i.e.* collecting—frequently stealing—wood for the bonfires) just before the Fifth of November, played "tin-can squat" and "rally-ho" round the half-built houses, climbed and larked about on the builders' timber stacks, exchanged penny dreadfuls, and sometimes made plans for an adventurous future. If those plans had been more sensible, they would still have been futile; for out of this group there are, I think, only two of us left alive. There are great gaps in my acquaintance now; and I find it difficult to swap reminiscences of boyhood. "The men who were boys when I was a boy," the poet chants; but the men who were boys when I was a boy are dead. Indeed, they never even grew to be men. They were slaughtered in youth; and the parents of them have gone lonely, the girls they would have married have grown grey in spinsterhood, and the work they would have done has remained undone. It is an old worn topic: the choicer spirits begin to yawn at the sight of it: those of us who are left of that generation are, it seems, rapidly becoming mumbling old bores. It is, however, a subject that has strange ramifications; probably I should not be writing this book now if thousands of better men had not been killed; and if they had been alive still, it is certain that I should have been writing, if at all, about another and better England. I have had playmates, I have had companions, but all, all are gone; and they were killed by greed and muddle

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and monstrous cross-purposes, by old men gobbling and roaring in clubs, by diplomats working underground like monocled moles, by journalists wanting a good story, by hysterical women waving flags, by grumbling debenture-holders, by strong silent be-ribboned asses, by fear or apathy or downright lack of imagination. I saw a certain War Memorial not long ago ; and it was a fine obelisk, carefully flood-lit after dark. On one side it said *Their Name Liveth for Evermore* ; and on the other side it said *Lest We Forget*. The same old muddle, you see : reaching down to the very grave, the mouldering bones. . . .

Several of us had arranged with the secretary to see that original members of the battalion to whom the price of the dinner was prohibitive were provided with free tickets. But this, he told me, had not worked very well ; and my old platoon comrades confirmed this, too, when I asked about one or two men. They were so poor, these fellows, that they said they could not attend the dinner even if provided with free tickets because they felt that their clothes were not good enough. They ought to have known that they would have been welcome in the sorriest rags ; but their pride would not allow them to come. (It was not a question of evening clothes ; this dinner was largely for ordinary working men.) I did not like to think then how bad their clothes, their whole circumstances, were : it is not, indeed, a pleasant subject. They were with us, swinging along while the women and old men cheered, in that early battalion of Kitchener's New Army, were with us when kings, statesmen, general officers, all reviewed us, when the crowds threw flowers, blessed us, cried over us ; and then they stood in the mud and water, scrambled through the broken strands of barbed wire, saw the sky darken and the earth open with red-hot steel, and came back as official heroes and also as young-old workmen wanting to pick up their jobs and

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their ordinary life again ; and now, in 1933, they could not even join us in a tavern because they had no decent coats to their backs. We could drink to the tragedy of the dead ; but we could only stare at one another, in pitiful embarrassment, over this tragic-comedy of the living, who had fought for a world that did not want them, who had come back to exchange their uniform for rags. And who shall restore to them the years that the locust hath eaten ?

There are nearly always compensations. Thus Bradford is a city entirely without charm, though no altogether ugly, and its industry is a black business but it has the good fortune to be on the edge of some of the most enchanting country in England. A sharp walk of less than an hour from more than one tram terminus will bring you to the moors, wild virgin highland, and every mill and warehouse will be out of sight and the whole city forgotten. However poor you are in Bradford, you need never be walled in, bricked up, as a round million folk must be in London. Those great bare heights, with a purity of sky above and behind them, are always there, waiting for you. And not very far beyond them, the authentic dale country begins. There is no better country in England. There is everything a man can possibly want in these dales, from trout streams to high wild moorland walks, from deep woods to upland miles of heather and ling. I know no other countryside that offers you such entrancing variety. So if you can use your legs and have a day now and then to yourself, you need never be unhappy long in Bradford. The hills and moors and dales are there for you. Nor do they wait in vain. The Bradford folk have always gone streaming out to the moors. In the old days, when I was a boy there, this enthusiasm for the neighbouring country had bred a race of mighty pedestrians. Everybody went enormous walks. I have

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known men who thought nothing of tramping between thirty and forty miles every Sunday. In those days the farmhouses would give you a sevenpenny tea, and there was always more on the table than you could eat. Everybody was knowledgeable about the Dales and their walks, and would spend hours discussing the minutest details of them. You caught the fever when you were quite young, and it never left you. However small and dark your office or warehouse was, somewhere inside your head the high moors were glowing, the curlews were crying, and there blew a wind as salt as if it came straight from the middle of the Atlantic. That is why we did not care very much if our city had no charm, for it was simply a place to go and work in, until it was time to set out for Wharfedale or Wensleydale again. We were all, at heart, Wordsworthians to a man. We have to make an effort to appreciate a poet like Shelley, with his rather gassy enthusiasm and his bright Italian colouring ; but we have Wordsworth in our very legs.

Sunday morning, after the battalion dinner, opened wonderfully, so a little party of us took a car into the country. It was plain from the very first that the local enthusiasm had not vanished. All that had happened since the war was that it had taken a somewhat different form. Before we used to set out in twos and threes, in ordinary walking clothes, for our Sunday tramps. Now they were in gangs of either hikers or bikers, twenty or thirty of them together and all dressed for their respective parts. They almost looked German. We passed the hikers very early on our journey, and so I cannot say much about them, except to doubt whether this organised, semi-military, semi-athletic style of exploring the countryside is an improvement upon our casual rambling method. These youngsters looked too much as if they were consciously taking exercise : they suggested the spirit of the lesser and priggish

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Wordsworth rather than the old magician who had inspired us. We saw a good deal of the cyclists, however, passing troops of them all along the road up to Grassington ; and I remember wondering exactly what pleasure they were getting from the surrounding country as they never seemed to lift their heads from their handlebars, but went grimly on like racing cyclists. They might just as well, I thought, be going round and round the city. But perhaps they call an occasional halt, and then take in all the beauty with a deep breath. There was plenty to take in too, that morning.

We went to Ilkley, then through Bolton Woods to Burnsall and Grassington, and never have I seen the country so magnificent. The long dry summer had given it an autumnal colouring that was past belief. The morning was on fire. The dry bracken and the heather burnished the hill-tops ; and all the thick wood beside the Wharfe were a blaze of autumn. The trees dripped gold upon us. We would look down our vistas to the green river. We would look up, dazzled to see the moorland heights a burning purple. If we had been ten years in a dark cell and newly released we could not have stared at a world that seemed more extravagantly but exquisitely dyed. I have never seen Bolton Woods looking like that before, and hardly dare hope to see them like that again. It was their grand carnival, and it will riot and glow in my memory as long as I live. Grassington came, where several water colouring friends of mine, as well as a number of wool merchants from Bradford, have made their home ; and after that we slipped into Upper Wharfedale, which is narrower and less wooded and far more austere than the lower reaches. There are great limestone crags for walls there, and between them the valley is smooth and green. Half-way up we passed the pleasant village of Kettlewell. I always like the story of the woman from one of the remote outlying farmyards—they look like

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white crumbs on a vast rumpled green tablecloth—who when asked by the parson why he never saw her in Kettlewell these days, replied: “Oh, I used to like going into Kettlewell about once a week, but now I can’t stand t’ racket.” And I remember a woman who lived in one of these remote farmhouses, a solid West Riding countrywoman and not one of your fanciful arts-and-crafts misses, who swore that she saw fairies dancing on the hillside. (Have these lonely folk keener senses than ours, or do they merely take to imagining things? It is still an open question, and not to be settled by a report from a committee because a committee would never see anything.) We reached Buckden, towards the head of the Dale, and a notable goal for Bradfordians, who have emptied the barrels at the inn there many a time; and then we turned left, towards the long remote valley of Langstrothdale, up which you may go to Hawes in Wensleydale. We stopped, however, at Hubberholme, a tiny hamlet that had a fine little old church and a cosy inn. There we stayed for lunch.

Once up there you seem at first at the world’s end; and indeed you are a long way from anywhere, certainly from a railway station. It is the internal-combustion engine that has brought such a place as this on to the map, just as it has changed—or is changing—the whole face of England. Before the Industrial Revolution, before the railways came, these dales were more thickly populated than they were twenty years ago. (Wensleydale, with its castles and abbeys and ruined farms, must have had quite a considerable population in the Middle Ages, whereas it seems almost empty now.) It was steam power that brought people swarming into a few centres and kept them close to the railway lines. Now, after less than a hundred years of this centralising and canalising influence of the railway, people are being spread out again. We thought the railway system



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would last for ever, and it is dying now and the whole movement of the population is being reversed. The very coaching inns are with us again, their grooms and ostlers transformed into mechanics and garage men. And what interested me at the inn in this remote Hubberholme was that the talk before lunch—with the landlord, a townsman here for his health, leading in—was all about local festivities, dances here, concert parties there, all manner of urban jollification. You could hardly ask for a better example of the change that is taking place in the country than this, for here was a region remote enough, yet the younger folk were as bent on enjoying themselves as any in the towns. Some of them were bent on other things too, for I heard how two brothers, young farmers up from the dale, had hanged themselves; not at the same time but within a few months. There was nothing wrong, as far as anybody knew, with the affairs of either of them; they were ordinary, pleasant, sociable young farmers; but both their bodies had to be cut down in their lonely farmhouse and then brought to the village on a sort of improvised sledge. I wonder what strange story that farmhouse could tell. Before I leave this inn I will add that for lunch they gave us soup, Yorkshire pudding, roast chicken and sausages and two vegetables, fruit pudding, cheese and biscuits, and coffee, all for two and sixpence each. And that—when they have a mind to it—is the way they do it in Yorkshire.

J. B. PRIESTLEY, *English Journey* (1934)

## THE LAST FLING

THE next day we changed once more our plan of operations. And here I must digress to explain one of the difficulties which beset our enterprise, and which I have not so far mentioned.

## THE LAST FLING

It was a linguistic one. Roger and I had arrived in Brazil knowing no word of Portuguese, though I had a little bookish and erratic Spanish. On the way up country we had picked up a little of the language, and coming down the Araguaya we had perfected a kind of rudimentary patois, sufficient for the purposes of badinage with the men. The prop and mainstay of this dialect was the word *Tem*, which corresponds (at least I think it does) to the French *Il y a* and the Spanish *Hay*. This was almost our only verb, and on it devolved the onerous duty of vitalising an extensive though inaccurate vocabulary of nouns; it bore the burden of all the persons and all the tenses. On the part of the natives it required a great deal of intuition to set the *Tems* on fire with meaning.

Our patois was adequate for the simple contingencies of camp life. But when it came to discussing the merits of some elaborate and not easily definable plan of action, and comparing them with the merits of two or three alternative plans, its deficiencies were painfully evident. Queiroz was a rapid talker and only a fairly good guesser; and at our councils of war we could never be certain whether we had interpreted his wishes rightly, or he ours. So many of the factors which helped to form our plans were imponderable—there was so much supposition and guesswork, so many combinations of possibility—that in the absence of an effective *lingua franca* generalship was a difficult business. Queiroz's opinions, though not those of an expert, were at least based on a wider experience than ours; unfortunately, we were rarely able to make the most of them. Our ignorance of Portuguese, like our lack of a fish-hook, was a constant source of irritation.

Though it was possible to outline a course of action to Queiroz, we could not explain our reasons for adopting it, or elicit his views on its potential modification. There was a sense of frustration, of incompleteness, about

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our discussions : just as there would be about the intercourse of two deaf men trying to expound to each other the theory of relativity in the middle of Piccadilly.

Anyhow, this is how we changed our plans on the day after we had waded up the river.

It was obvious that we should not make much more progress up the river-bed itself, for it was getting more and more overgrown, with deep pools between the tangles ; we had exhausted the benefits of amphibianism. The open country which Roger and I had spied the day before looked promising ; but I was still determined not to lose touch with the river by striking away from it at a venture. Moreover, we were now in, or at least very near, Indian territory ; to cover distance was no longer our first concern, the crow's flight no longer the sole criterion of our efforts. For it was idle to pretend that we should get much further towards the Kuluene without guides and fresh supplies ; even barring accidents (a bit of grit in the action of the .22 would have crippled us altogether), I knew that we should have to acknowledge defeat at any moment. Our only hope of postponing that moment lay in getting in touch with these invisible Indians and finding (*a*) that they were friendly, (*b*) that they had with them more food than they needed, and (*c*) that they would come with us towards the Kuluene. It would have been difficult to find three more remote contingencies than (*a*), (*b*) and (*c*).

All the same, it was worth trying, if we could only find out how to try it. I decided to take all our gear to the edge of the open country, a mile upstream ; to leave it there in charge of Queiroz ; and to make an unburdened reconnaissance with Roger. Apart from keeping a look-out for Indians, we would aim at finding an easily accessible camping ground further up the river ; if we did, we would return to Queiroz, bring up the stuff along our tracks, and make camp before

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nightfall. The advantage of this scheme, theoretically, was that it left Roger and me active and mobile without our packs, which by this time were reducing us to the level of oxen, able merely to plod forward, without enterprise, without curiosity, hoping only for a valid excuse to lie down. I looked forward to a certain amount of the eagle-eye business.

An hour later we were saying good-bye to Queiroz on the edge of the jungle. He fired the scrub there, to make a landmark for us, and went back to our base, 400 yards away on the river-bank. Roger and I struck across the campo in a westerly direction.

It was a hot, bright morning. The country looked somehow more exciting, promised more, than usual. Perhaps it was the knowledge that we were close to Indians, that at any moment a string of little black figures might debouch across the blank yellow grass between two distant clumps of trees. Perhaps it was the lie of the land, the disposition of the solitary or clustered trees which picketed its desolation, that lent it a fortuitous attraction : just as, at a shoot where all the covers are new to you, one irrationally arouses higher hopes than the others. But I think that really it was I, and not that immutable plateau, who was different on that blazing morning, still acrid with last night's smoke.

Hitherto my imagination had not been fired by the thought that we were in a place never before visited by white men. There were several reasons for this. I abhor labels, and I am not impressed by records. If you tell me that a thing is the largest, or the oldest, or the newest of its kind in the world, I feel no awe : I am not conscious of that sense of privilege which the mere fact of being in its presence ought by rights to arouse in me. I am, if anything, rather prejudiced against it. For by that braggart and fortuitous superlative the thing seems to me to be laying claim to a respect which has

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nothing to do with its essential qualities. The phrase "to go one better" has come to be very loosely used; it is too often forgotten that to exceed is not necessarily to excel.

In my mind the thought of the word Untrodden aroused some shadow of this prejudice. I looked at those plumed expanses, aching in the heat, at the inviolable murmurous reaches of our river, and I did my very best to feel like stout Cortez. But it was no good. Common sense strangled at birth the delights of discovery, showing them to be no more than an unusually artificial brand of snobbery.

After all, common sense pointed out, the things you see would look exactly the same if you were not the first but the twenty-first white man to see them. You know perfectly well that there is for practical purposes no difference between a place to which no one has been and a place to which hardly anyone has been. Moreover it is quite clear that your visit is going to be entirely valueless; for all the useful data you are capable of bringing back the Great Unknown will be the Great Unknown still. You will have made a negligible reduction in that area of the earth's surface which may be said to be Untrodden; that is all. On your return you will write a book in which you will define at some length the indefinable sensations experienced on entering territory never entered before by a white man; but you know perfectly well that these sensations are no more than the joint product of your imagination and literary precedent—that at the time you were feeling only tired and hungry, and were in fact altogether impervious to whatever spurious attractions the epithet Untrodden is supposed to confer on a locality.

So far common sense had had things all its own way. But on this fiery golden morning, plodding across those decorative and enigmatic wastes, I became suddenly converted to the irrational, the romantic point of view.

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I felt all at once lordly and exclusive. After all, nobody *had* been here before. Even if we found the spoor of no prehistoric monsters, even if we brought back no curious treasures and only rather boring tales, even if we were unable to give more than the vaguest geographical indication of where exactly it was that we had been—even if these and many other circumstances branded our venture as the sheerest anti-climax—Roger and I would have done a thing which it is becoming increasingly difficult to do—would have broken new ground on this overcrowded planet. As an achievement it was quaint rather than impressive ; like being married in an aeroplane, or ringing up Golders Green from San Francisco. But as long as one recognised it as freakish rather than creditable, as long as one never forgot how little it was really worth, it would be to one for ever a source of rather amused satisfaction.

In this comfortable though childish frame of mind I stumbled through the long grass beside Roger. We were making for a distant clump of very tall trees, which was as good a goal as our aimless purpose required, and a better landmark than most of the scenery on this empty stage provided. We were expecting—at this date, so long after disillusionment, it is odd to remember how confidently we were expecting—to sight at any moment a range of mountains : the Serra do Roncador, no less, the Snoring Mountains. Hardly a map of those which we had seen—from the most cautiously non-committal to the most recklessly commercial—but had stamped those words across the country before us, the country between the Araguaya and the Xingu. But our horizon remained empty ; we might as well have searched it for the Angels of Mons. The Serra do Roncador does not exist ; or exists elsewhere. One of the first things I read on my return to London was the statement of Mr. Petrullo, of the Pennsylvania University Expedition,

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who flew over some of the Kuluene country, that "the supposed range of mountains does not exist."

But we could not know this at the time. We could not know that the Serra do Roncador was a figment of the fevered imagination of Brazilian cartographers, a stage property in the unauthenticated legends of Indians. Somewhere at the far end of the shimmering, unnumbered miles in front of us we looked for mountains.

We came at last to the clump of very tall trees. We passed the cordon of indolent palms which fringed it. We crossed the hard cracked bed of a dried-up pool which had given the trees their extra cubits. On the far side we found one which looked as if it could be climbed. We piled our equipment at its roots and went up.

Climbing trees made us realise how far we were from being in the best of condition. The last few days had geared us for solid unrelenting endurance; not for frantic acrobatics, which told on us more than they should have. In physical emergencies we discovered alarming weakness.

All the same, we followed the branches as far as they would take us and clung, sweating, to the last tapering forks, sixty or seventy feet above the ground. All round us the heads of palms nodded in gracious, slightly ironical condescension. We had a magnificent view of the Great Unknown.

To us it looked familiar. Open country, quilted with the tops of close-set clumps of trees, stretched as far as the eye could reach; and doubtless further. We cursed the visibility, which was bad; last night's smoke lingered as a tenuous haze. We had hoped from here to see those mountains.

It is always pleasant to be higher than one's surroundings; sky-scrapers have contributed materially to American self-confidence. We hung there, cooling, as

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our tree swung slowly to and fro. I ran my eyes along the river's carapace of jungle, searching for a break.

Then something happened that changed all the values of that spacious but unresponsive scene. From beyond the river's guardian belt of trees—here at its narrowest—a yellowish club-shaped cloud of smoke rose slowly and began to spread. We watched it. We were too far away to hear the ravening of the flames. We could see only the smoke, a sudden, bulbous and significant growth above the green wall of trees less than a mile away: laborious but dramatic in its rise, like the beanstalk in a pantomime. We were indeed close to Indians; and they knew it.

Looking back along the way we had come, we saw the smoke from Queiroz's fire, a diffuse brackish strain across the blue sky. It was being answered.

"Come on," said Roger.

We were both rather excited. We swarmed down the tree, to the ominous but unregarded sound of tearing. Then we picked up our equipment and the rook rifle and made for the jungle.

For once, the jungle did us a good turn (though we did not feel like that about it at the time). It tripped us up on the threshold of what would probably have been disaster. Forced to scramble and make detours, cut off by the enclosing trees from the irresistible beckoning of that pillar of smoke, our forlorn hope lost impetus. By the time we reached the river, sanity, sponsored by exhaustion, had returned; and the smoke had thinned and spread, so that you could no longer trace its original source. Moreover, the river was deep here, too deep to be crossed without stripping: a thing we were both loath to do while we stood a good chance of being attacked. Also the jungle on the further bank was inordinately thick; it would be folly to cut our way through it when our only hope lay in silence.



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We were disappointed. Anti-climax, as usual. Our high hopes withered. Our excitement, like the smoke, was dissipated. We began to drop downstream along the river, searching for a clearing on the opposite bank. Vestiges were plentiful. I wondered if the Indians had marked us down, or if they thought of us as being out on the campo, near our smoke.

We had only the river-bank to march by, and that led us on a twisting course. It was a long time before we found the place we wanted : a good and strategically strong camping ground, with only a thin fringe of trees on the opposite, the Indian bank, between the river and the campo.

But it was past noon. If we were to get back to Queiroz and bring up the gear before nightfall we had no time to reconnoitre the opposite bank now. We marked the place and went on working our way downstream.

The going was bad, but we hesitated to strike back on to the campo, where it was better. Queiroz's fire, lit with such forethought for our guidance, had exceeded its terms of reference, spreading swiftly over a huge tract of country and making a holocaust of all our landmarks. It was better to play for safety and stick to the river-bank, which must eventually lead us back to our base, by however maddeningly tortuous a route. We had a strenuous, groping afternoon.

Queiroz received the news that Indians had answered our smoke with his usual impassivity. We ate a partridge which I had shot, a particularly well-knit bird, and shouldered our loads. We got back to the chosen camping ground with an hour to spare before nightfall. It was a good place, sandy and secret and backed by thick cover which made the distant possibilities of night attack even more remote. The river here had altogether changed its nature. It was no longer swift and shallow and much overgrown, but ran in a deep and

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very nearly stagnant channel between steep and sometimes rocky banks. Though we were a stage nearer its source it seemed to have grown rather than diminished.

There was some talk of crossing to the other bank after dark and taking compass bearings on anything that looked like a camp fire, so that in to-morrow's reconnaissance we should have some clue to work on. I wanted to have a look at the lie of the land ; so while Queiroz was making a fire I stripped and tied a pair of trousers round my head and waded across. The water came up to my neck ; the river was deeper here than we had known it since we had left São Domingo.

As usual, the open country on the other side was less open than it looked. The scattered trees and the tall grass made a screen which the eye could not penetrate to any great depth. About 400 yards inland there was a thickish belt of low scrub, and on the edge of it stood a tree with a broad but curiously twisted trunk. This I climbed.

I stayed up it for half an hour, and in that half-hour the world below me changed. A wind began to sing in the sparse leaves round my observation post. The sky darkened. Massed black cohorts of clouds assembled in the west and came up across the sky under streaming pennons. The wind rose till its voice was a scream ; great weals appeared in the upstanding grass, and in the straining thickets the undersides of leaves showed pale and quivering in panic. My tree groaned and bent and trembled. The sky grew darker still.

The earth was ablaze. That fire which the Indians had lit raced forward under the trampling clouds, and behind me, on the other side of the river, a long battle-line of flames was leaping out across the campo we had fired that morning. Huge clouds of smoke charged down the wind, twisting tormented plumes of yellow

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and black and grey. The air was full of fleeting shreds of burnt stuff. The fall of sparks threw out little skirmishing fires before the main body of the flames. A dead tree close beside me went up with a roar while the fire was still half a mile away.

There was something malevolent in its swift advance. The light thickened and grew yellow; the threatening sky was scorched and lurid. If there could be hell on earth, I thought, this is what it would look like. I remembered with a curious distinctness a picture which had made a great impression on me as a child: a crude, old-fashioned picture of a prairie fire in a book of adventure. Swung to and fro among the gesturing branches of my tree, I saw again in memory every detail of that picture: the long grass flattened in the wind, the fierce and over-stated glare of the approaching fire: and in the foreground a herd of wild horses in panic flight. I remembered that they were led—inevitably—by a grey: that a black horse in the right-hand corner of the picture had fallen and would be trampled to death. I even recalled the place and time when I had first seen this picture: the dark winter afternoon, the nursery in which I was recovering from illness, the smooth brass rail on top of the high fender gleaming in the firelight, the shape of the little tree outside the window where half a cocoanut always hung for the tits. I realised with surprise how near the distant image of that picture had been to the reality now before me, and how curiously the fascination exerted by the image had foreshadowed the fascination exerted by the reality.

There was indeed a kind of horrible beauty in the scene. A fury had fallen upon the world. All the sounds, all the colours, expressed daemonic anger. The ponderous and inky clouds, the flames stampeding wantonly, the ungovernable screaming of the wind, the murky yellow light—all these combined to create an atmosphere of monstrous, elemental crisis. The world

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would split, the sky would fall ; things could never be the same after this.

The fire was almost on me now, but my retreat to the river was open and secure. Flames flattened and straining in the wind licked into the belt of scrub beside my tree ; great gusts of heat came up from below and struck me. Little birds—why so tardily, I wondered—fled crying to the trees on the river-bank. Two big kites warily quartered the frontiers of the fire, though I never saw either stoop. Presently one of them came and sat on a branch below me, so close that I could have hit him with a stick. He stayed there brooding majestically, with his proud eyes, over the work of desolation. Every now and then he shrugged himself and fluffed his feathers : for fear, I suppose, that he might entertain a spark unawares. I felt oddly friendly towards him, as one might to a coastguard in a storm ; his imperturbability, his air of having seen a good deal of this sort of thing in his time, were comforting. But a spark stung my naked back, and I swore. The kite looked at me in a deprecating way and dropped downwind to the next tree.

Then the storm broke. It opened first a random fire of huge and icy drops. I saw that we were in for worse and scrambled down the tree : not without regret, for I had seen a fine and curious sight and would willingly have watched for longer, the cataclysmic evening having gone a little to my head. But shelter of a sort was essential, and I found the best available under the trees on the river-bank.

On the opposite side Roger and Queiroz had bundled our belongings into a hole between the roots of a tree and were sitting on them, to keep them dry. It was a hopeless task, though. There began such rain as I had never seen before. It fell in sheets and with ferocity. It was ice-cold. It beat the placid river into a convulsive stew. The world darkened ; thunder leapt and

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volleyed in the sky. From time to time lightning would drain the colour and the substance from our surroundings, leaving us to blink timidly at masses of vegetation which had been suddenly shown up as pale elaborate silhouettes, unearthly, ephemeral, and doomed. The rain beat land and water till they roared. The thunder made such noise in heaven as would shortly crack the fabric of the universe. The turmoil was almost too great to intimidate. It could not be with us that Nature had picked so grandiose a quarrel; her strife was internecine. Dwarfed into a safe irrelevance, dwarfed so that we seemed no longer to exist, we had no part in these upheavals. Roger and I smiled at each other across the loud waters with stiff and frozen faces.

The thunder drew slowly off. The rain fell still, but no longer with intolerable force. I slipped into the river, on my way across, and found it so warm that I wished that I had gone to it for shelter from the numbing rain.

The trees had done something to protect our fire, but it was almost out. Shivering like pointers, Roger and I knelt over it in curious heraldic attitudes; our bodies sheltered the last dispirited embers and kept the fire alive. We were so cold that we could hardly speak.

But presently the rain stopped, and the fire was coaxed out of its negative frame of mind into a brisk assertiveness. We thawed, and began to cook a meal and to review the situation.

It was not so much a situation as a predicament. Everything we had with us was soaked. It is true that in this circumstance there was no cause for immediate alarm. We should no doubt survive a night spent in clothes which were after all not much wetter with the rain than they normally were with our sweat. The little that was left of our food was not in a form which could be spoilt even by what corresponded to total and prolonged immersion. As for the films and cameras, their ruin would not prejudice our chances of survival.

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As far as our possessions were concerned, the storm had left us virtually unscathed.

There were, it is true, our weapons : the little rifle and the revolver. We depended on the one for food, and we might have to depend on the other for defence. Both were wet ; they were rusting before our eyes, for lack of a dry stitch to wipe them with. Their never-very-reliable mechanism would be in a horrible condition by the morning.

But there was more to it than the certainty of an uncomfortable night and the danger of a partial disarmament. We had good reason to feel daunted as well as dragged. For we could not afford to look on this storm as an isolated phenomenon, an unlucky fluke, a source only of easily bearable inconvenience. We had to admit that it looked very much as if we had seen the beginning of the rains.

We knew what it meant if he had. We should have to turn tail and run for it, guzzling quinine as we went ; even if all turned out for the best there were at least five hard weeks of travel between us and the nearest roof. If this was really the rains, we should be lucky if we all three got down to Pará with our skins.

The worst of it was, there was every reason to suppose that it was the rains, or at any rate that they were almost upon us. Local opinion set their advent for early September ; and these were the last days of August. The two storms in the last week were the first rain we had seen in Brazil.

All through the night the sky was threatening. It was too cold to sleep very much ; Roger and I, huddled over the hissing fire, drowsily debated the merits of retreat and advance. In the end we put off a decision till the morning.

In the morning the sun was reinstated. The sky was bland and blue, pretending that it had never been any-

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thing else. But the ground steamed ; as birds moved in the branches there was a staccato patter of drips. Our clothes were still wet. The little rifle was red with rust. We set about facing the facts.

Lacking the gift of prophecy, or a meteorological flair, we decided to ignore for the moment the relation between last night's storm and the approaching rains, and to assume for the purposes of argument that we had several weeks in hand before they broke.

In the light of this unwarrantable assumption we examined the situation. Our total food supply was now as follows :—

One half-pound tin of Quaker Oats.

One and a half hunks of rapadura.

Two ounces of Horlicks' Malted Milk Powder.

One ounce of tea.

A quantity of sugar, estimated by Roger (who carried it) at a ton or slightly over.

Half a pound (approximately) of sediment at the bottom of the sack, comprising farinha, chocolate, biscuit crumbs, toilet paper, ants, blood, sweat, and tobacco. (But in the process of taking the inventory most of this got eaten.)

This sounds as if we were on the verge of starvation. Actually we were very far from it, as long as the little deer continued accommodating and plentiful, and the .22 did not let us down. But it will be clear to the discerning reader that our reserves of food were too limited to permit of any protracted operations in the field : unless, of course, we could supplement them.

Our chances of doing this were problematical. We were close to Indians, who in the absence of evidence to the contrary must be assumed to be hostile. We should certainly not meet them unless they wanted to meet us ; and though clearly aware of our presence it looked as if they belonged to that class of persons

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(happily almost extinct in the civilised world) who are said to keep themselves to themselves. Besides, even if we did meet them, and they did prove friendly, there was little likelihood of their having with them enough food to put our commissariat on its feet again: I remembered those exiguous bundles of mandioca, those few poor heads of maize, which were all the Tapirapés took with them on the march.

In short, we had at that moment just enough food to see us through the journey back to São Domingo. Were we justified in chancing our luck and using that food for a further advance of two or three days, relying on our digestions and the .22 to get us home on a purely meat diet?

We decided that we were not. I know that this decision was theoretically sound; and in practice, as things turned out, it was extraordinarily lucky that we took it, for when we got back to São Domingo, as you shall hear, the supplies we had left there had disappeared and our iron rations had to last us until we got back to the Araguaya. But it went against the grain to turn back on that clear and lovely morning. We were certainly within a hundred miles of the place where Fawcett met his death, and the distance may have been considerably less if he made good progress on those days when the Kalapolos were watching his fires. Provided the rains held off, we could very easily have kept going for two or three days more until we ran completely out of food. But we should have had a bad time of it on the way back, and I hardly think we should have done much good. If one of us had gone lame, or if anything had happened to the .22, it is improbable that we should have got out at all.

But I felt sorry to be giving up this ridiculous scramble; it had been great fun. As we strapped on our still sodden loads an enormous alligator, the biggest I have ever seen, came quietly gliding up the narrow channel



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opposite our camp (I wondered where it had been when I waded the river the night before). Here was a chance to work off some of our resentment against unkind circumstances; and as it drew level I took a careful shot with the .22 and got it in the eye.

That was probably the most phenomenal result ever produced with a rook rifle. The peaceful river boiled. The alligator thrashed its head from side to side in agony. Then, as the tiny bullet touched (I suppose) its brain, it reared itself out upon the further bank and lay there, killed with a crumb of lead.

There was no time to strip off my load and wade across to measure it: though I should have liked to do this, for it really was a very big one. We left it sprawling there, to mark the futile end, reached with much difficulty, of a hopeless quest. If those secret Indians came to our camp after we had gone (as I expect they did) I hope they were suitably impressed by a monster so mysteriously dead.

PETER FLEMING, *Brazilian Adventure* (1933)

## VENICE

VENICE is one of the most peculiar as well as one of the most picturesque cities in the world. It is not merely an island, it is one hundred and seventeen islands. Though none of these is of any great size, there are enough of them to require some four hundred bridges, most of the bridges being made of ancient stone. There are no motors, no horses, no trolleys, no buses in Venice, for the excellent reason that there are no streets. Instead of pavements and promenades, there are avenues and alleys made of water, there being no less than one hundred and fifty of these water-ways or canals.

Thus Venice is not only built in the midst of water, but actually on it. The tide rises against the very steps

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of the buildings, slaps against the walls, and gives one the impression of a magician's pleasure-city floating upon the sea. To be more realistic, although Venice, like Venus, rose from the water, she does not float upon it ; she rests very solidly on her unstable-looking foundation. The marble domes, the fluted balconies, the lordly columns, the carved arcades rest securely on supports of wood and stone ; it is said that more than a million piles uphold this island empire situated on the coast of Italy half-way between Florence and fairy-land.

Lacking motors, cabs and cars, we must get on without them. Yet, rather than swim, we look for some means of conveyance. We look, hoping to find, in so fantastic a place, something wild and strange, something out of the Arabian Nights. We are not disappointed. Here the gondola, that strange bark, is at home. The gondola looks like a long dark bird with a huge, sharp-cutting beak—a cross between a black swan and a water-serpent. Weird, gliding creatures they are and weird cries come from them, especially at night.

But it does not take you long to discover that appearances are deceptive, especially in Venice, that this queer craft is the Venetian's taxi, and that the peculiar bird-like cries are made by the boatmen. It is something of a jar for the poetic nature when it realises that the melancholy chant " Ah-oh-el ! " signifies " Look out ! " and that the tune of a romantic despair means nothing more than " Keep to the right." Every gondolier is supposed to be another Caruso, just as every Italian child is supposed to sing Verdi in his cradle. But most of the operatic boatmen who misguided me past the museums I wanted to see into the lace-factories I did not want to visit, seemed to be suffering from too much energy and enlarged tonsils.

Nevertheless, the gondolier is extraordinarily skilled—only the most sensitive oarsman could guide so large

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a craft through thread-like canyons and around razor-edged corners—and most people still prefer the little covered cabins of the gondola to the larger and more recent motor-boats. Whatever he may lack as a tenor, the gondolier is a model of dexterity and grace. Balanced by the iron beak or prow, he stands on the raised rear end, known as the “poppa,” scarcely moving. His paddle, which is more like a pole, barely ripples the water; his body shows not the slightest sense of effort. Yet the long boat swerves on its own axis, turns tail, thrusts itself ahead, or glides to your destination with an ease that is like no motion you have ever felt except in dreams.

There are two Venices, the Venice of the nonchalant native and the Venice of the astonished sight-seer. Both meet, morning, noon and night, in the great Piazza of Saint Mark. Here the word “great,” too large for most things it usually accompanies, is too small. Applied to this glory of a square, “great” becomes meagre, miserable, minus. To describe this plaza one needs new gigantic words, words that have never been used to advertise soups or cigarettes or super-cinemas, words that exist only on some furthest, undiscovered star and would be written in letters of light.

Lacking such words, let it be prosily stated that the first sight of the Piazza of Saint Mark is so dazzling that the eye cannot rest on any one spot. In front of you (if you enter it the “right” way) rises the magnificent San Marco, or the Church of Saint Mark, enshrining the bones of the Evangelist. On each side are palaces of the highest officials of the ancient Venetian Republic, as well as the Old Library (“perhaps the most magnificent secular edifice in Italy”), founded by the poet Petrarch who, settling in Venice, made the city a gift of his valuable collections. In one corner, built on top of a gateway, is the curious clock-tower and its bronze giants. In another corner is the Piazzetta, or

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Little Piazza, with its square campanile (bell-tower) and the much-pictured granite columns—one bearing a statue of Saint Theodore, the other supporting the winged Lion of Saint Mark, the Gospel held in his right paw. The Piazzetta is half-enclosed by the splendid Palace of the Doges (or Dukes) and ends abruptly with a brilliantly reflecting sea which makes the marbles seem even more dazzling than they are.

The winged lion is everywhere in Venice. Sometimes he crouches ; sometimes he stands up fiercely ; sometimes his strength seems to be in the Book he leans on ; sometimes he brandishes a sword. But he is always in sight. And naturally so. Every Italian town had its figure that served as emblem, mascot and device—a protection as well as a proclamation. Florence flaunted the patrician lily. Perugia displayed the griffon—or, as readers of *Alice in Wonderland* may prefer, the gryphon—on her shield. The men of Pisa always carried their eagle with them when they went to war and his screams were supposed to bring fear to the enemy and triumph to the Pisans. The winged lion was, however, the most powerful of all the emblems for, so the Venetians contended, he came straight out of the Bible, being the pet beast of one of the four Evangelists, and the greatest of these.

There is less authority for the tale of the two bronze giants on the clock-tower, but it is a rare story.

In the days when wonders happened more frequently than now and strange adventures were a small part of the day's work, there lived two giants who had become much talked about. The rest of their tribe had died out and their nearest relatives, who had gone to live in the caves of the far North, were quiet and God-fearing creatures. But these two, whose names happened to be Ferro and Forte, respected nothing and no one. They laboured morning and afternoon, night after night, sleeping only one day every twelve months—and that

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day being the shortest day of the year. Mining was their work ; digging metal their pleasure. So greedy were they to collect all the iron and copper in Italy that they tore down hills, uprooted forests and wrecked mountain-pastures in their haste. Nor was that the worst. So noisy were they at their labours—for they had voices that matched their size—that no one for miles around could sleep. Heroes had been advertised for ; large rewards for giant-killers had been posted in all the villages near Venice. But no rescuer appeared, and the countryfolk had nothing to fall back on except their prayers.

Yet when things are at their worst and hope is feeblest, nothing is more powerful than prayer. One day—it happened to be a Sunday—an Angel of the Lord appeared to the two giants. Ferro had just finished throwing down ten wagon-loads of iron with a deafening clatter and Forte was picking it up with an even louder noise.

“Where are you going ?” said the Angel of the Lord.

“To Venice,” replied Ferro, “if it’s any of your business.”

“It is my Lord’s business,” answered the Angel quietly. “It is because of Him that I am here.”

“Well,” growled Forte, “what does He want ? Don’t keep us standing here !”

“He wants you to remember the Sabbath,” said the Angel, more quietly than ever. “You must keep the Sabbath holy. On it you shall not labour nor do any work.”

“The Sabbath ?” asked Ferro, with a sneer. “That’s the day when your Lord tires of working—once every seven days, isn’t it ?”

“There is a time for everything,” quoted the Angel. “There is a time to break down and a time to build up, a time to cast away and a time to gather together, a time for labour and a time to cease from——”

“That’s all very fine,” interrupted Forte, “but we

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have better things to do than listen to a sermon. Besides, we're not interested in the Sabbath. It may be all right for the lazy men and women who worship your Lord, but not for us. We're too busy."

"And," added Ferro, "we don't care about time, either. We are above Time and his little hours. We will sing when we want to and dig where we please."

"And now," concluded Forte, "we go to attack the foundations of Venice—Sabbath or no Sabbath."

"Very well," said the Angel, so quietly that the giants did not notice how grim he had become. "Very well. You shall go to Venice. And you shall never be parted from the copper and iron you dig without stopping; indeed, they shall be part of you. And you shall be above Time. Oh, yes, you shall be above it. But you shall obey it. Of a surety, you shall not forget 'Time and his little hours.' Oho! You shall keep account of Time's smallest divisions. Yes, you shall keep a count of them for ever. You shall watch the tiny minutes crawl like iron tortoises and even the winged seconds will seem like bronze eternities to you."

And there on the clock-tower they stand to-day, those two giants, changed into the metal they loved too well. They are "above Time" in one sense at least, for the platform on which they stand is a hundred feet above the blue-and-gold dial which records the minutes. But they are not too far above Time to forget to obey it. On the contrary. They wait, those two giants, until the despised minutes crawl around like iron tortoises, and then they are more bound to Time than ever. With their hammers of iron and copper they must labour, striking the bell between them, announcing the hours of their servitude. Thus Ferro, the iron one, and Forte, the strong one, have become the slaves of Venice as well as the servants of God. And on the Sabbath day they strike the hours of rest with a special sound,

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a chime which adds the thanksgiving of rest to the song of labour.

Saint Mark is the patron saint of Venice—the church at the head of the Piazza being the most elaborate of his monuments—yet he was not born in Venice nor did he ever live there. When the evangelist was preaching the Gospel, he travelled through Italy. From Rome he went to Rimini, and from there to the smaller towns along the Eastern coast. A storm drove him on one of the sand-banks where Venice is now situated and, since there was not the slightest sign of shelter, the saint gave himself up for lost. As he knelt down for his last prayer, the sky cracked and out of the lightning stepped an angel. “Peace to thee, Mark,” cried the heavenly messenger. “This is not the end of thy labours, but the beginning. Thou shalt travel far and ever further ; thou shalt not die until thou art revered by the greatest city. Yet, though thou shalt be buried as Bishop of Alexandria, thy bones shall find their resting-place on this shoal in the heart of this uninhabited lagoon.”

The prophecy was fulfilled, though it took almost a thousand years. When Attila the Hun ran fire and sword through Italy, the towns near the lagoon were laid waste. Those who could escape fled to the network of islands where the channels were so few and the sand-banks so treacherous that the homeless ones were not pursued. “Cut off from cities and supplies, they will die of fever and starvation,” thought their enemies. But those who were once citizens of wealthy towns learned a new and simpler way of life ; they taught themselves to fish, to make boats, to navigate the most dangerous harbours. Soon the first church was erected, strengthened with marble from the ruins on the mainland ; soon they had made a city and a civilisation. From a possibility the Venetian navy became a power. Then one day, in the year 829, a Venetian ship brought the body of St. Mark from Alexandria to the new church

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which was being built on the very sand-bank where the evangelist had been stranded. No one knew how the sacred bones had been obtained, although foul play and bribery were suspected. But the prophecy had been fulfilled and, a few years later, Venice had a shrine as great as St. Peter's in Rome. By the end of the tenth century the church of St. Mark's was one of the world's wonders. Every ship that came to Venice brought treasures for its enrichment : alabaster and curiously veined marbles, odorous woods for the mosaics, gold and jewels for the *pala d'oro*, that superb piece of Byzantine jeweller's work which crowns the high altar. The evangelist's lion was seen everywhere ; his image guarded home and harbour ; the angel's greeting, " Pax tibi, Marce " (" Peace to thee, Mark "), became the state motto.

The church remains worthy of its saint. Time has not cheapened its proportions nor dulled its colours. The effect, with its many mounting domes and five hundred marble columns, is delicate, fantastic and monstrous with the richness of the East. It seems to have grown like the Oriental stories which inspired it.

The palace of the Doges is as old and almost as exquisite as its neighbour, St. Mark's. Here all the styles meet without prejudice—Oriental, Gothic, Renaissance—none takes command, none contradicts the other. It is hard to decide whether to look longer at the rich upper arcade known as *La Loggia*, like lace in stone ; or the statues of Adam and Eve ; or spend most time in the interior with its succession of princely rooms acting as a sumptuous background for the paintings of Tintoretto, Palma Giovane and, particularly, Paolo Veronese. Here is the overpowering *Paradise*, Tintoretto's masterpiece, the world's largest painting with more than five hundred figures, and here are some of the most sumptuous ceilings eyes have strained to see. Here the Great Council sat to determine the conduct



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of the state ; here the all-powerful Ten issued orders which were to " hold the gorgeous East in fee " ; here plots were hatched which poets and dramatists have seized on. Only the Academy of Fine Arts, with its Bellinis and Titians, offers a grander display of pictures ; only the Grand Canal is more truly Venetian.

If you can imagine a combination of business street, a double row of palaces, a ghetto and the Arabian Nights—and then place the result in the midst of water, you will have something like the Grand Canal. Herr Baedeker, at the mention of whose name all good travellers cross themselves, describes it as " this magnificent thoroughfare, one of the finest in the world," adding that it is adorned with about two hundred palaces mostly dating from the fourteenth to eighteenth centuries, and every bend in its S-shape course reveals new beauties. Description is useless—even Herr Baedeker, for all his astounding information, does not dare attempt it. You will understand why as soon as you make your first trip down this chief artery of traffic. Take a gondola—the motor launches move too quickly—and take your time, for every foot of the two miles is crowded with romantic beauty and rich associations. Here—and guides, gondoliers and gratis charts will tell you precisely where—are the buildings which endear Venice to every visitor : the ornately rounded church of Santa Maria della Salute ; the house which legend has assigned to Desdemona ; the palazzo bearing a memorial tablet which tells of Robert Browning's death there in 1889 ; the triple palace of Mocenigo occupied by Byron in 1818 ; the Palazzo Loredan, dating from the twelfth century, which Ruskin declared was the least conspicuous but most beautiful in the whole extent of the Canal ; the building—one of the most attractive in Venice—where the composer Richard Wagner died. Here, connecting the east and west quarters of the town, is the bridge of the Rialto, flanked by shops—a district remembered by

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all who remember Shylock—and here is the *Ca' d'Oro*, the famous “*Golden House*” whose gilded arches and pillars could be seen, they say, even through the darkest nights.

As the schoolboy put it, “At every part of the Grand Canal, one stands with open mouth, drinking it all in.”

The principal “sights” of Venice can be “seen” in three days. Closer study and more intimate details could keep you for as many months—or years. There is Lido (literally “sand-bank”), the last word in bathing beaches, where you can scarcely see the water because of the celebrities. There are the three near-by islands which can be visited in one day: Murano, where the delicate Venetian glassware has been made ever since 1290, and where you can see copies of the antique vases being blown to-day; Burano, home of the costly point-lace (*point de Venise*) and an interesting fishing village; Torcello, that solitary shrouded isle with its cathedral dating from the early ninth century, and its Byzantine mosaics. There is the day's trip to Padua, celebrated as the place where St. Anthony was born and Giotto painted his finest frescoes.

But everything brings you back to the square of St. Mark's where the four bronze horses are just as much at home in the central arch of a Christian church as on the pagan arch of Nero, their first eminence. Nor will you forget the pigeons of the Piazza. In fact, you cannot forget them. They are as populous, as persistent and ever-present as the pigeons of St. Paul's in London, and rare is the visitor who escapes without being photographed feeding them. The commerce and conquest of the Venetian Republic has dwindled to tourists with visas in one hand and a bag of corn in the other. Yet, in spite of her fall from glory, though her islands are plural and plebeian, Venice is still “the city noble and singular.”

LOUIS UNTERMAYER, *The Donkey of God* (1935)

## THE NOMADS' ROAD TO KABUL

FROM the Khyber to Kabul, I saw the road as a moving string of camels. The nomads, who had spent the six months of winter in India wandering as far south as Calcutta and the ports of the Western Ocean, were returning to their mountains. The great serai at Dakhr could not hold a tenth part of the animals laden with merchandise, tents and bedding. Huge, shaggy beasts, with tassels hanging among the folds of fur, filled the lane between rows of tea-booths. They looked as if they wore stockings and mufflers. I supposed they had put on their thickest coats for the journey, but the material was beginning to wear thin. Hip-bones and shoulders protruded from the woolly coverings. They were proud beggars, those camels, with their magnificent fur in tatters.

As shaggy and as loosely covered were the huge men in pushtins who mingled with them on the most intimate terms. Or perhaps they were quite small inside their colossal leather coats, the raw hide embroidered with orange and lined with sheep's fleece, the unused sleeves standing out in peaks. Each pushtin had the appearance of walking about by itself. The owners had wine-dark faces with the boldly curved noses of Jew or Roman, and though they wore all sorts of haphazard headgear, from hateful little woollen caps, mass-woven somewhere in a sweated civilisation, to turbans biblical in volume, there was enough red and blue about their persons to maintain the illusion of Asia.

The women had the same arrogant noses and a flush of red under their brown. They were covered with silver. It was sewn on their sleeves and spread in a breastplate of coins upon their bosoms. It hung in fringes on their foreheads and made fans below their ears. It imprisoned their ankles, sheathed their arms from wrists to elbows.

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Each woman was a banking account, recording her husband's prosperity. And some of them were beautiful as well, with a sun-ripened, fruit-like beauty, and hair wrought into many plaits.

I admired those women. They were bold and active, prodigal of movement. They were like Joseph, in coats of many colours. Their skirts blazed with bands of red and yellow set upon black, and they walked all in a piece without movement of hip or shoulder. They never looked at the ground. With their shoes upon their heads they trod sublimely, barefooted over sand and rock.

The camels looped upon an unending string. The men sat on the shelves of the tea cupboards, their legs tucked under them, their lips moist and drooping, bowls of pale green liquid in their hands, water-pipes beside them. The women shouted as they strove with the camels. Their children and the young of other species, kids, lambs, and puppies, were piled high above the humps, from which they looked as if they must immediately fall.

My lorry, loaded with benzene, from Peshawar to the frontier no more than a cheap means of conveyance, became a red Bucephalus. Simultaneously, it was one of those small, stalwart horses, thick of neck and coat, astride which the proud lords of Persia fought the invading Tartars, or the Moghuls hewed their way to the rape of India. It charged among the camels and its driver waxed mightily indignant. His father had been in the Sind Horse, but he, an Afridi, loved machinery. Gesturing splendidly among the turmoil of beasts, he had no hands left to drive. The women shrieked and strained against the lumbering towers of camel. Ropes broke. The engine over-heated. Boxes of tea and bales originating in Japan, became intimately involved with our benzene barrels. Tails went up, loads were shed. Bucephalus bucked forward. And this went on for two days.

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No doubt at intervals the road was clear. I remember one evening, a well-dressed man in brown praying all alone in the middle of a desert. There was no village within sight, yet he remained unhurried and imperturbable. As he knelt upon the sand, he contrived to interpose his state of mind as a barrier to protect him from his own and everyone else's activities. I thought of him at the time as a pilgrim who had discarded for a space the habiliments and the countenance he usually wore.

At another time, the road ran rough between a waste of stones, the graves of the third Afghan war. The driver shivered as we passed. "There are too many dead. The earth is restless. It moves——" He became a politician, as is the habit of India. "This is what you have done and now you want friendship after one hundred years of blood. You hope the young will forget, but in the schools they are saying that it was the tribes who fought you. It was with them you had a quarrel, yet you left the mountains unpunished and destroyed the towns." With the last words he put a hand on his breast, and the terrible humility of India overcame him. "I am a poor man. I understand nothing of these things."

The plain broke into villages. All of them had mighty walls. They looked strong and prosperous. Yellow mustard gilded the land. There was no sign of the intrusive poverty in which an Indian village heaps together its dust and sores, its dogs, children, and the remnants of its hovels. Those villages are defiant and completely self-sufficient. "The richer the peasants, the poorer the Government," said a man who had asked for a lift. After that he talked a great deal. He said, "The Afghan has only one vice and it is hospitality. If he has fattened a chicken for weeks to eat it with his family at some little celebration, he will kill it, without a thought, for a guest. He is the friendliest and the

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most suspicious of men. His obstinacy is only equalled by his desire to serve his friends and destroy his enemies. The Afghan—well, I am an Afghan.”

He might have added, “and the citizen of no mean country.”

On the second day we left what I had imagined were the mountains and came to the real mountains. Bucephalus misbehaved. It was the camels who passed us with their scornful heads averted and that staccato gait, so detached from the earth, that suggests tortoises on stilts. The lorry made intractable noises, while we all gathered snow and packed it under the bonnet. We threw handfuls of snow at the radiator and forced more into it. I don't know what this effected, but with the help of amused peasants who emerged, earth-coloured out of the earth, we incited Bucephalus to movement and leaped hopefully into our places. After a few hundred yards we stopped again among a host of donkeys whose patchwork loads made a quilt upon the road. More snow. More help from camel-men and tent-dwellers.

Occasionally a nomad in an immense quantity of coats hailed us with a greeting originally Australian. If he had not himself acquired it selling camels or rugs in the Southern hemisphere, he had no doubt inherited it from a parent. “All Afghan carpet merchants marry Australians,” explained the driver. Pressed as to the accuracy of his statement he modified it. There had been, he said, an Abdul Wahid, known some thousand miles further south as Mr. Wade. There had also been a fierce red-headed woman called Kate, who had ruled a tribe with her tongue. She swore louder and with greater variations than anyone else in the country, but this was long ago. Perhaps such marriages did not happen nowadays. He added that the price of wives was falling.

For interminable hours we laboured up a road that

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deserved better of us, for it was well made and not too rough. We exchanged compliments and condolences with other red lorries quiescent in peculiar positions. We helped to push. We were ourselves most generously pushed. At one moment we made a forward rush, result of much snow poulticed over the more fevered portions of the engine, and at the next, most of the floor fell out. The hands of strangers replaced it. The barrels were rearranged, and the owners of the hands ensured further disaster by adding themselves to our load. And all this among the same slow turmoil of beast and driver. So that the road moved with us and in the end we became part of the caravan with which at the moment we were confused.

Kabul has a beauty like nothing else on earth. The Afghans do not appreciate their capital because it is not sufficiently modern. They long for the traffic of London, the buildings of Paris, and the inconveniences of every American "burg." With an infinity of charm they explain that Kabul is only beginning and they are so sad about it, and at the same time so proud, that one dare not draw their attention to the mountain setting or tell them that Kabul has only one rival—Santiago in the Andes.

"We are building schools and hospitals—" they say, and it is true. There are a number of modern buildings, simple in design and well placed beside the river or at the end of long avenues. In fact the new Kabul, clean, quiet, spacious, has a good deal to recommend it. There is a Nordic air about the canals, the shorn white trees in winter, the unbroken line of the walls, the white paint or the grey, and the orderly restraint which applies to the demeanour of the people as well as to the style of their architecture. But this is an acquired effect. It is not yet Afghanistan.

The country is so individual that it merits more

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original expression in its capital and this it finds in the great walls which fling themselves over the hills above the fortress of Bala Hissar.

In the contrast between the plain where Kabul lies, an earth-coloured city splashed by the new white buildings, the new grey roofs of barracks, palaces and colleges, and the mountain ramparts so much more brilliantly white which enclose it, in this sharp insistence on change where for thousands of years men have dwelt too near the earth to need anything else, lies the challenge which contemporary Afghans fling at Afghanistan.

The plain holds a lake delicately blue. It is shadowed with a mist of poplars. In spring the villages, each surrounded with smooth splendid walls, stand deep in fruit blossom. It is a flood of red and rose-colour spreading over the earth. Only the watch-towers rise out of it, and the broken bastions from which the last rebel, Bacha i Saqan, shelled the town. Around the plain there are mountains and they are not feather-smooth like the Sierra near Granada, which reminded Osbert Sitwell of the "wings of angry swans." They are rugged under the snow. Clouds add to their height and shadows deepen their ice blues and greens into the purples of a storm-driven sea. But on a clear day they are white, and I have never looked at them without surprise. They are nearer to the city than most mountains, and more final. The country needs no other defence and certainly no further justification.

The Afghans, perhaps, have ceased to see their mountains except as barriers to invasion, and to the mechanised civilisation they long to impose upon a land familiar to Alexander, Genghis Khan, and Akbar. But in moments of relaxation they pay tribute to their orchards, to the foam and froth of blossom breaking against the poplars.

The bazaars present a more difficult problem. They may be dirty. They are certainly old-fashioned if the



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term can suitably be applied to Abraham or Mohammed. But they are, as surely, beautiful although the Afghans who know Paris or London refuse to acknowledge it. Instead of an ancient tapestry in which each figure has its value, they see tribesmen who will insist on wearing too many garments and all of them the wrong shape. They see townsmen who will sit on their feet instead of on chairs. Instead of a diapason of sunshine falling through torn roofs upon the street of carpets, they see beams out of alignment and walls reaching for mutual support. They talk of poverty and age as if no beauty could be found in them, yet the bazaars at Kabul satisfy every sense.

They are full of smells, strange exciting smells, whose origin I long to know. They echo with an amusing—and for that matter most modern—cacophony of sound—but the singing of birds predominates. For in every cupboard shop, with the merchant tucked away on a shelf among his canes of sugar wrapped in brilliant paper, his furs, knives, striped rugs, long-necked bottles, fat-stomached pots, his books of large squiggly lettering, his silver bracelets and gold-embroidered caps, there is a cage or half a dozen cages full of the smallest imaginable birds. And they all sing. They never stop singing.

But the place where I can never refrain from that quick intake of breath which means delight, and an always-surprised delight as well, is that very street of carpets with the broken roof. One comes to it from the dimness of the covered bazaars, from the raw scarlet of silk and chemists' labels. The sun is spilled between the beams so that there is a lovely pattern of light and shade. The shops are heaped one upon another, each warm and rich with colours that have come from Merv, Isfahan, Samarkand, the legendary towns where men went to their looms as an artist to his easel. Dust turns to gold in the streams and spears of light that

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fall all ways across the darkness and the calm faces of the merchants, leaf-brown, leather-brown, framed in beard and turban, acquire a distinction that is in itself an emotion, like the sudden discovery of a new effect in a familiar masterpiece. I shall never forget that street. I shall never be able to describe it.

There are always black days on a journey, but I remember few of such Cimmerian hue as that which immediately followed my arrival in Kabul. The arrival itself had been odd enough, for, long after dark, my lorry—without lights, of course—had driven into what appeared to be a pit surrounded by walls without end. Obviously, it had no intention of going further. With a sigh of relief the driver extricated himself from the oddments ranging from a pillow to a giant revolver with which he had been confused for two days. "It is the customs," he vouchsafed, and within a few minutes I found myself seated on my bedding, clutching a suitcase, a tin of biscuits, and a sun-umbrella, badly damaged by contact with the flanks of recalcitrant donkeys, bullocks and camels. Shadows, agreeably proportioned, loomed in front of me, and from them came voices speaking Persian or Pushtu, in neither of which languages, I decided, was I sufficiently fluent to dissuade a determined official from examination of my luggage. So I sat forlornly at the feet of the shadows, and when these asked in charming and sympathetic tones, "Why do you come to this country if you do not speak any civilised tongue? Bismillah, it is a misfortune!" I replied, "Tonga."

Having repeated this word with every variation of accent for close upon an hour, a tonga eventually arrived. The Afghans are kind to women and to the mentally afflicted, so at least a dozen of them hoisted me into the back seat, upon which the shafts left the horse altogether, and but for the precipitate action of

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the coachman, the miserable animal would have been suspended in mid-air from his collar. Adjustments having been made, we dashed through colossal double doors, followed by the screams of my first friend, the chauffeur. At the last moment he had decided he could not leave me, so, with the revolver under one arm and the red-embroidered pillow under the other, he hurled himself upon the tonga. In a confusion of hips and elbows, we rattled into the town, and first of all it was a fine town with canals beside broad streets and new white houses drawn up like soldiers. But after a while it disintegrated into bazaars tunnelling under mud roofs, and these were deserted except for an occasional ghost, or it might have been a policeman. We saw no face, just a figure without particular shape and of a curious transparence as it passed from steps awash in a pool of light to the waves of shadow under the arches.

While the chauffeur was apologising for the bumps and our consequent intimacy, and assuring me that the British Legation was exactly in the middle of the town, we left the last houses behind us inhabited only by dogs.

After that, the conversation proceeded as follows :  
“ If the Legation is in the city, where are we going ?  
Don’t beat the horse ! Tell him not to beat the horse ! ”

*Chauffeur* : “ How then shall we arrive ? Truly we are going in the wrong direction, but he is an old man and feeble. I have my revolver.”

“ I hope it isn’t loaded——”

Interval for incomprehensible and apparently heart-rending exchange.

*Coachman* : “ There is the Legation—you are at its doors. I tell you it is in the town.”

*Chauffeur* : “ I see nothing. Truly, the great English do not live on a mud-heap. Oh, Mullah, to what bad end are you taking us ? ”

“ Is he a Mullah ? I won’t have the horse beaten like this. It’s half dead already.”

## THE NOMADS' ROAD TO KABUL

*Chauffeur* : "No, he is not a Mullah, but he has a beard. Since we are going ever further from the Legation, he must beat or we shall not get there."

Roused to frenzy by our criticism, the coachman stood up and urged the remnants of his steed into a gallop. Now there wasn't even a tomb to keep us company. The last dog had returned to the distant city. Too much shaken for further protest, we clung to the seats and hoped for a quick end. It came. On one wheel, we spun round a corner and fell on our noses in front of suitably magnificent gates.

The horse was the first to pick itself up. Some time later the chauffeur pulled me to my feet. My hat and his revolver were gone. Worse still, the gates remained shut. From the further and more desirable side of them peered a face surrounded by a khaki muffler.

While the coachman gathered our belongings from the ruts into which they had fallen, the chauffeur and I attempted to weaken the resolution expressed on the face. We spoke in several languages without the slightest effect. This often happens in Central Asia and one is unjustifiably annoyed because, of course, they are rarely the right languages. However, the chauffeur continued to draw the most moving pictures of my character and position, with equally pathetic references to the state of exhaustion which had—in some unexplained fashion—been responsible for our accident. Meanwhile the coachman had put together horse, cart, and luggage and, seated in the dust a bare six inches from the gate, was obviously prepared for an all-night argument. His speech flowed with a magnificent disregard of truth, and through the awed ejaculations of the chauffeur, I found myself raised to the state of a governor's wife, several governors' wives! My car, all my cars, had broken down. My servants, a host of them, were following.

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It was this duplication of material that finally persuaded the porter. To avoid the onslaught of a host, he admitted one dust-stained and dishevelled female of a race unaccustomed to falling out of tongas at Legation gates in the middle of a perfectly ordinary night without the excuse of a revolution or even of a stray assassin !

In this fashion I arrived at Kabul and the Olympian Thomas Cook, generally known as Fortune, who, I am sure, always concerns himself with the affairs of travellers, evidently decided that since I had made such a mess of my first appearance, I must do without his help. Consequently, the first thing I heard next morning was that the North Road, the only means of crossing the Hindu Kush, was blocked by late snow.

"At least, I suppose it is blocked," said my informant. "But there's something rather odd about your visit. No, I don't mean last night. It's the Afghans. They're the most hospitable people in the world when they know you, but they don't like strangers, and I can't say I blame them. They've suffered enough in the last hundred years."

Considering the first sentences while listening to the last, I decided they needed amplification. "What's odd?" I asked, and saw the Diplomatist wince.

"It would be difficult to tell you in so many words, but I feel the Afghans—mind you, they are charming people and great friends of mine—would like to have a look at you before they decide to let you loose on the North Road."

"Well, when can I see the P.M.? He *is* in Afghanistan, isn't he?"

The Diplomatist contrived an expression admirably suited to the sympathy he felt for both parties concerned. "I think you should resign yourself to waiting a week or two. Play their own game. If you are patient, you will probably be able to wear down their resistance. Do not hurry. Here, we are so used to this sort of

## THE NOMADS' ROAD TO KABUL

situation. There is never anything to be gained by hurrying."

"But what is the situation?" I demanded.

The Diplomatist allowed surprise to verge on disapproval. "I thought I'd explained. A certain amount of suspicion—it is a delicate matter. As I said, they're the most generous of hosts. Once they've had a look at you, I'm sure——"

"But how can they have a look at me, if they won't see me," I protested.

The Diplomatist smiled. "You'll find the situation will improve—that's just a matter of choosing the best moment——"

He was right, of course, but this reflection did not comfort me as I drove to the Soviet Embassy, its flag the brightest note of colour in a street of whitewash, mud, and leafless poplars.

An Afghan soldier, very smart in his thick khaki, opened just sufficient door for me to enter, for it was one of those old-fashioned houses surrounded by walls, in which courts and rooms lead one into another until, somewhere in the centre, one finds an unexpected garden. Here the Ambassador received me. He was a large man, portly and good-tempered. His appearance suggested that he enjoyed being amiable and would be glad to help anyone he happened to like. I thought he might like quite a lot of people, but I reminded myself gloomily that a Slavonic appearance is specially designed for the hiding of all material thought.

"But, Madame, I know nothing whatsoever about your visa. I have received no instructions at all——"

In vain, I pleaded that after eight months' negotiation Moscow had accorded the said visa, and London had sworn that Kabul should be informed. Even at so disastrous a moment, I was amused to find we spoke of the three towns as if they were individuals and after a while, still smiling, we used their names familiarly, saying with

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a shrug that no doubt "London" had been busy, or "Moscow" careless.

Meanwhile we politely disguised our thoughts, or, perhaps the Ambassador, having, as it proved, no need for strategy, was merely concealing a certain discomfort at having to refuse what, as a man, he would so much rather have granted.

In the end we compromised on a telegram. It was a good telegram and more explicit than most of those addressed to dilatory Government departments, but I hadn't much hope of its effect because I had sent just the same sort of telegram six years ago, first from Tehran and then from Tabriz. The result in both cases had been a decided "No," even a pleased and self-congratulatory "No." In fact, my only comfort that black day was the reflection that since Russia was excellent at saying "No," there could be no reason why she should hesitate to say it, or make use of subterfuges to avoid saying it.

When I returned to the Legation to send other telegrams, I was met by a cheerful, "Well, I didn't expect them to be quite so final about it, but I'd have been more surprised if you had come back with the visa in black and white. Now, you'll *have* to be patient. Sit down, be calm, and let's see what you make of Kabul."

Another voice added, "Here, you've got the whole of modern Afghanistan——"

A third contradicted: "The reason for it, let's say——"

ROSITA FORBES,  
*Forbidden Road—Kabul to Samarkand* (1937)

## HOLIDAYS IN THE SOVIET UNION

### HIGH DAYS AND HOLIDAYS IN THE SOVIET UNION

HOLIDAYS ; the mind at once leaps to Easter, Whitsun, and Christmas ; but not in Russia. There they celebrate 21 January, the commemoration of the death of Lenin in 1924 ; May the First, International Labour Day ; 7 November, the anniversary of the October Revolution, and 5 December, the ratification of the New Constitution. It surprised me at first that the anniversary of the October Revolution should be celebrated on 7 November, till I learnt that the old Tsarist calendar had been thirteen days out of date and it was only after the Bolsheviks had taken power that it was altered to conform to international custom.

Besides these general annual holidays there were the ordinary free-days occurring every sixth day throughout the month. I had expected these to be on the 6th, 12th, 18th, etc., of each month as I had found them on my arrival in Moscow, but later found that this applied only to big cities. They had, at one time, been universal on these days, but the crush of peasants coming in to the big cities each free-day to see the sights and do their shopping, had caused such chaos and congestion on the railways and in the shops, that they have now "staggered" the free-days round the week in the proximity of the big cities. At Orekhovo we usually got our free-day about two days after Moscow, but it varied slightly with the number of days in the month.

I spent many of these free-days exploring the country round Dubrovka, going for long tramps through the snow, at first with Harry or with German friends ; later, when I got to know them and their language, with Russian friends from the works.

The forests, fir, pine, and occasional silver birch, stretched for miles on every side, and in the winter,



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with their branches bowed down with snow and with the clear, frosty blue sky overhead, these forests bore eloquent testimony to the origins of the Russian fairy stories and folk-lore.

The forest, though apparently limitless, was carefully marked out with regular series of boundary posts. For the safety of travellers, pieces of red cloth had been tied on to the higher branches of trees at intervals along the paths in case these were obliterated in heavy snowstorms. The Soviet Union takes many precautions against haphazard deforestation and it is most strictly forbidden to go out and cut trees down, indiscriminately, for one's personal use. A few days before I finally left Dubrovka, in the autumn of 1937, Harry Lawrence got in touch with the local forestry authorities and asked to be allowed to cut a supply of firewood for the winter. The forester marked a number of trees in a copse which he wanted thinning out, and Harry and I borrowed a couple of axes and spent two days cutting them down, lopping and stacking them. He was wrestling with the transport problem when I left.

In the summer walking became easier as the snowdrifts melted away, but it was often too hot to think of walking and I was content to spend my free time either at the river or sun-bathing in the hammock on my balcony.

In my long walks in the country in spring I was surprised to note how little the flowers, birds, and animals differed from those in England. I saw foxes and hares, squirrels and hedgehogs, and all the common birds like rooks, crows, and sparrows. On one journey I saw a magpie but was relieved to reflect that superstition has been abolished in the Soviet Union.

One free-day when I had been nearly a month in Russia I plucked up my courage and decided to have a haircut. I walked down to Orekhovo and eventually found the right shop—Perikhmakherskaya, which, believe

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it or not, I easily remembered once I realised it was derived from "peruke-makers." Walking into the saloon, I had a horrible suspicion I had come into the wrong department—all the assistants were feminine—so I slipped out again and looked at the name on the door; yes, "Mujkaya" (gentlemen), one of the first essential words to learn in any foreign language. So I re-entered and looked carefully at the faces of the draped customers; yes, I was all right, they were men.

I eventually reached my turn, brought out the one word I had specially learnt for the occasion, "Haircut, please," whereat the assistant said: "How do you like it done?" My knowledge of Russian was not then up to explaining the technicalities of hair-cutting styles, so I decided to risk it and said: "Just as you think best," or rather the nearest equivalent I could find in Russian: "According to your own will," which caused much merriment in the shop. That phrase appeared to have a special significance in Russian.

After I had explored my immediate surroundings in Dubrovka and Orekhovo, I spent many free-days in the capital, Moscow. Moscow was about sixty-five miles away from Orekhovo and there were nine or ten trains a day in each direction. The fare was only 1 rouble 90 kopecks, or about 4½d. There were no special reductions for day or monthly return tickets.

On Russian trains the first and last carriages are for smokers, a special one in the middle for mothers with their children, and the remainder non-smokers. I have seen a Russian woman "borrow" a child from another who had two with her so that she could gain entry to the less crowded reserved carriage. The wooden benches in the ordinary carriages have seating accommodation for seventy-two, but I have counted as many as a hundred and forty-three in one carriage on some days. In spite of this crowding, men come through selling sandwiches, sweets, apples, and ices. Beggars

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are also a fairly regular feature of Russian trains. I was surprised at the generosity with which the Russian people gave to these beggars, especially when it is generally known, and even the beggars themselves admit, that the Government gives State pensions to the unfit—"Enough for bread, but not enough for vodka," as I once heard it put. My own explanation of their generosity is that it is a survival from the old religious days, when it was a cheap way of getting a blessing. There seem to be no regulations about luggage in carriages. I have travelled up with such assorted goods as a live pig and a small empty coffin.

Tickets were never printed with the name of the destination on the local trains; they had a system of zones round Moscow. Orekhovo was in the eighth zone, and at the ticket office in Moscow I would just say: "Eighth zone." I suppose, if the whim seized me, I could have travelled out sixty-five miles in the other direction with that ticket. Tickets were rarely inspected, never collected.

Having spent the day up in Moscow on one occasion, I missed the last train back to Orekhovo, the midnight, and heard that there was no other till 6.30 the next morning. I resigned myself to sleeping in the station till it went and sent a wire to my chief at Karbolit to say I should be late in to work the next day.

Just as I had found a pitch to sleep in, and was dozing off, I heard an announcement from the station loud-speaker that the mail train for Gorky was leaving in five minutes. Knowing Orekhovo was on the main line to Gorky, and not caring whether it was a mail train or not, or even whether it was due to stop at Orekhovo, I decided to travel by it. I climbed over the railings on to the platform and asked the guard: "Can you give me a lift to Orekhovo?"

"This is a mail train. Local passengers are allowed only if they have a permit from the postal authorities

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countersigned by the station-master."

The train was due out in two minutes. I walked to the rear of the train, crossed the line and clambered on to the off-side steps of a carriage, waited till the train was well out of the station, and climbed in. The guard didn't seem annoyed or even surprised when he found me. He produced a receipt-book, from the size of which I gathered that passengers on mail trains were no rarity, and fined me fourteen roubles (2s. 10d.). He lent me a nice soft parcel as a pillow for the journey. The train had been scheduled to stop at Orekhovo.

My telegram was delivered at the works the next afternoon.

That is, if I may be permitted to generalise from such a trivial incident, quite typical of the new Russia ; once one has been able to get through the thin outer shell of bureaucracy to the human Russian underneath, one finds him to be a very friendly and likeable fellow.

In my many trips to Moscow and during the three weeks I lived there before coming home, I got to know the city that most Russians still call "the big village." Compared especially to the planned order of St. Petersburg, Moscow was always a straggling collection of narrow and twisting cobbled streets.

It is a city of contrasts, at times of bewildering contrasts.

The probable explanation of why so many visitors come back from Moscow with such totally contradictory stories about conditions in Russia is that you can see there exactly what you decided to see before you went out there. You can see tall, splendid modern buildings, you can see tumble-down little wooden shacks. They are both there, cheek by jowl, and it is scarcely necessary to say which are Soviet and which Tsarist. You can see in one street the latest fifteen-foot American motor snow-sweeper, and in the next street an old peasant woman patiently sweeping up the leaves with

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a brush with about three hairs left on it. These things are typical of the transition stage through which the Soviet Union is passing, a transition often too abrupt for the Russian mind fully to adapt itself to it.

In places where the snow-ploughs could not reach they used a portable furnace with a big hopper on top. Into this the snow was shovelled till it melted and ran down the nearest drain.

The general appearance of the people in the Moscow streets was dull ; good clothes were very rare and those they had were usually in dark colours. The best-dressed and, for the most part, by far the most alert and efficient-looking people I saw were the Red Army officers.

The women usually wore greys and blacks in the winter, but some white and brightly coloured frocks were to be seen, especially in the park, in the summer. I never saw anyone wearing jewellery, but cosmetics had come on to the market during the last few years. These latter were, at that time, being rather indiscriminately used, but they will probably learn in time, as they are beginning to do in industry, that quality is more important than quantity.

In the centre of the city is the Kremlin, a great triangular "city within a city," surrounded by forbidding high walls, but from across the river can be seen green lawns and the spires of countless chapels. Here live Stalin and most of the other members of the inner circle of commissars and high officials. It is the nerve-centre from which the vast Soviet Union is ruled with a grip more absolute than any Tsar has ever held. Could those walls but speak, what ardent controversies they could solve.

Of the three half-mile walls of the Kremlin, one runs along the bank of the river Moskva, another is flanked by open spaces, museums, and Academies, and the third faces on to the famous Red Square and across that to the

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offices of the Central Committee and the Commissariat of Defence. At the lower end of the Red Square stands the church of St. Basil, one of the most amazing architectural oddities. This was built to the order of the Tsar, Ivan the Terrible. It looks as if a child had been let loose with a box of bricks ; domes, spires, and buttresses grow out without symmetry or plan on every side.

Some of the onion-shaped domes are twisted, some are curved, others have facets like a diamond, and all are painted in every colour of the rainbow. Having had this created to his order, Ivan the Terrible decided to safeguard its uniqueness and—blinded the architect.

There are clear traces of two old city walls running at varying distances round the Kremlin ; these are now converted into two fine circular thoroughfares known as the " Ring of the Boulevards " and the " Ring of the Gardens."

I spent some of my time in Moscow trying to get a job in the Soviet educational world. I went to see the People's Commissariat of Education, the Moscow Education Committee, the Red Army Educational Department, and several schools, including the Anglo-American one where instruction is given in English, and a German school. I came nearest to success at the last mentioned, where I almost got a job as a teacher of Spanish, but in the end they all pointed to a recent circular from the Commissar for Education saying that, as visas were liable to be revoked, no more foreign teachers were to be taken on as the change of teacher was bad for the children.

I also paid a visit to the radio centre in the " Palace of Labour," the Trade Union headquarters, in what was once the Cadets School, and tried to get a script accepted for broadcasting, but had no luck there.

After these disappointments I decided to pass my days in Moscow in more enjoyable pursuits than job-hunting.

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I spent one morning going round the Moscow Zoo with a friend from England. They had a very wide collection of animals, birds and reptiles, many of which seemed to have been in residence for several years. It rather surprised me that they had continued keeping and feeding them all during some of the acuter times of famine ; indeed, when remembering the stories current in England about the severity of the famines and the ferocity of the Russians, one is almost tempted to wonder how the animals themselves escaped the pot.

My usual way of travelling about Moscow was by tram, and here I blessed my youthful training in the Rugger scrum. Though they have improved in the last few years, the Moscow trams are still very overcrowded. I saw a notice in a tram, not actually in Moscow but in Kharkov :—

SEATS	.	.	.	20
STANDING	.	.	.	Not over 80

The only trouble is that once the legal limit of eighty has been reached, the conductress is quite powerless to stop another forty trying to get on, or if they cannot actually get on, just hang on to any possible handhold.

Adler told me that, some years earlier, he had been in a tram, standing by one side, and more and more people had crowded in till he was finally squeezed through the window ; and, to add insult to injury, fined for breaking it.

One is nominally only permitted to get in at the back and out at the front of trams ; women carrying children and people with large parcels are the only classes privileged to get on at the front. Those who have got on there, pass back their kopecks from hand to hand down to the conductress for their tickets. I used to go in terror of being picked on as one of this chain in the early days. I was sure I should get the order wrong

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and buy "three twenties" instead of "two fifteens." When sending up a note they usually took the precaution of shouting along the tram: "Two chervonitz coming up," to make sure it didn't go astray.

I am ashamed to say that I only once saw a case of anyone being caught without a ticket—myself. I was travelling to the station with my father and, having a suitcase, we had got on in front, and being deep in conversation after an absence of eight months from each other, forgot all about getting tickets. An inspector suddenly appeared and demanded them; I explained I had forgotten and he said: "Never mind, Comrade. I can hear you are a foreigner," and waived the standard fine (three roubles) which he had the right to levy on the spot.

Having got in in the regular way at the back one has to work one's way through the tram and so calculate one's passage to arrive at the front just as the tram reaches your stopping-place. In course of time the Muscovites have evolved a special technique of this. Once you have passed the conductress—there are scarcely ever male conductors and many of the drivers are feminine too—you nudge the person in front of you and say:—

"Where are you going to?"

"Preobrajenskaya."

So you move in front of him, and try the next man.

"Where are you going to?"

"Pushkinskaya."

If this stop is before yours, you stay behind him and, provided that he and all the people in front of him have been playing this sorting game properly, you move up through the tram at each halt, till you are eventually squeezed out at your right stop like the tooth-paste from a tube.

The only drawbacks to the successful playing of this game are that it requires a fair knowledge of Russian



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and a good acquaintance with the topography of Moscow.

It is easier to travel by Metro.

The Metro is the Muscovites' latest toy and greatest pride. They frequently ride up and down it for the sheer pleasure of admiring its pink and grey marble platforms, its subtly concealed lighting, and its shiny, butter-coloured trains. The fare is only thirty kopecks, irrespective of distance. When, as querulous foreigners sometimes do, someone complains that Communists can destroy but cannot create, or that there is no art in a Socialist society, the Muscovites always bring out the Metro as their first and most crushing answer. It is true that it was designed by an English engineer, but the extensions are now being carried out by the Soviet Government. It is greatly helping to solve Moscow's pressing transport problems.

On one of the rare wet days in Moscow I went to see the special Pushkin Centenary Exhibition in the Historical Museum in the Red Square, where a wealth of detail on his life, his friends, his works, and even on operas based on his works, had been collected. I also read his *Queen of Spades* to improve my Russian.

One of the great attractions of Moscow in the summer is the Central Park of Rest and Culture, now named in honour of Gorky and known to the less responsible Muscovites as the "Central Park of Rest *from* Culture." I knew it only in the summer, but hear that it was open in the winter too, and the long, straight paths were flooded for skating.

It was a big park, laid out on the bank of the river Moskva with most of the usual and some unusual features of entertainment. There were tennis courts, ping-pong and billiard tables, a special set of benches and tables for open-air chess, open-air theatres, a lake for small rowing-boats and the river itself for larger ones. These could have been found in most Continental

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pleasure parks. The more typically Soviet features were a Stakhanovite exhibition, mainly consisting of details of recently invented labour-saving devices and graphs of increasing output, and a parachute-jumping tower.

There was also a big diagram of the ten-year reconstruction plan of Moscow, showing the new, broad, straight boulevards radiating out from the centre of the city and the great green belt of eight or nine parks scattered round the city. The present Gorky Park, which is over a mile long, looked quite insignificant compared to some of the others on the plan. Inside this ring of parks were administrative offices, theatres, museums, etc. There was also an immense space left clear on the plan in the centre of the city, a little higher up the river from the Kremlin, for the projected Palace of the Soviets, for which they had just started pouring the foundations. The building will be some nine hundred feet high, with a statue of Lenin three hundred feet high on top. The foreign colony are already beginning to refer to it irreverently as "the wedding cake."

Outside the ring of parks come residential districts and factories, each one with its satellite blocks of flats and schools. Hospitals are planned to be well clear of the city proper. It is intended to limit the population of Moscow to five million. It is over four already.

I saw in the Gorky Park some of the finest examples of the Russian portraiture in plants, portraits, about fifteen feet square, of—as one might guess without being told—Stalin, Lenin, Gorky, and on one occasion of the three trans-Polar flyers, Gromov, Yumasheff, and Danilin. It amazed me how they could sow these little Alpine plants to come up so accurately into easily recognisable portraits, till I caught them at it one afternoon. They put them in ready-grown.

Perhaps the most striking feature of the park, to foreigners, is the parachute tower. There is usually a

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queue waiting to jump from it, and the first time I tried to go on it the instructor asked me :

“ What is your weight ? ”

“ Eighty-four kilograms.”

“ Sorry, Comrade. The safe load is only seventy-five.”

Next time I came there was a different instructor, so I “ reduced ” to seventy-four. A strong webbing harness was strapped on, gently but firmly, and I walked up the tower. At the top the harness was hooked on to a parachute, already held open with an aluminium ring, a girl instructor opened a little gate in the parapet and said “ Jump.”

I looked down at the earth 100 feet below and, for a moment, remembered all the stories about Russian ropes and tackle, but then vanity would not permit me to go back and ask the instructress to unhook me, so I jumped.

There was a sheer drop of about fifteen feet and then the parachute checked the fall with a jerk. I fell quite slowly, and had time to look around before getting ready to land. The drop was not at all severe, not more than off a six-foot wall. It is quite easy to remain standing if you time your arrival accurately. A rope prevents the parachute coming right down and smothering you, and then hauls it up for the next customer. The instructor told me that over 250,000 people had already jumped from that tower since its erection some five years before. The cost is a rouble a time. It is by no means exclusively a masculine sport.

After ten or twelve jumps from the tower you can get a chit from the instructor for you to jump from an aeroplane at your local aerodrome.

I had, one day early in May, done some overtime and earned two days' extra leave. I spent one of them going out to see the Moscow-Volga Canal of which there had been much news in the papers. The first time I did so I was too early. It had not yet been officially

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opened, but on the way out, in the bus to Khimky, I had met an Ukrainian lad who was travelling out for the same purpose and we decided that, though we were not allowed to go into the terminal station proper, we would walk up to the first bridge and see what we could from the other side.

We walked a mile or two up the road to the nearest bridge, a fine, new, single-span steel structure, and crossed to the other side of the canal; walking down the other bank, we came to a big stream flowing into the canal and were glad to get a ferry across for ten kopecks. The canal was not entirely artificial; there had been existing rivers and lakes for part of the way before. I heard that they had done a bulk of excavating twice as great as that on the Panama. We reached a point opposite the station from which we could get a good view of the passenger quay, the big waiting-halls and restaurants, and, rather lower down, the goods wharves and immense warehouses. There were none of those shabby little coal merchants' shacks that so often disfigure docks; just huge, plain storehouses and broad, sweeping drives and flower-beds.

Having seen as much as we could, for the canal was over two hundred yards wide, we went and inspected a big new hydroplane that was moored near us; we tried to persuade the pilot to give us a flip, but without success. On the way back we stripped and bathed, and my companion, who was a student in a pedagogical academy in Kiev, collected a bunch of marsh marigolds for his aunt with whom he was staying in Moscow. He told me that he had just had a year's sick-leave for a weak heart and had been getting his full student's stipend during that time.

One of the central buildings in Moscow, facing, appropriately enough, on to the Square of the Revolution, is the Lenin Museum. The exhibits ranged from his early school books and his letters to his parents—he

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seems from his home letters to have been a most devoted son—to the ephemeral, illegal newspapers that he edited while in exile in Paris, Geneva, and many other cities. These had all been placed in logical sequence and the Museum so arranged that they had to be seen in the correct order. The final room, full of tattered red banners, notices of his death from papers all over the world, and extracts from Stalin's funeral oration, was a most impressive scene.

Lenin himself lies embalmed near by in the Red Square ; I took an early opportunity of going to see him. He lies, since his death in 1924, in a simple but dignified granite mausoleum midway along the Kremlin wall. The mausoleum is open from five till seven each day ; even in the very bitterest weather I always saw a queue waiting to file past and pay their homage to the man whom the Russian people regard as having done more than any other to lay the foundations of their present happiness and future prosperity.

Joining the queue, which stretched shakily for some three hundred yards across the Red Square, I walked slowly along till I reached the mausoleum in about fifteen minutes. In times of crisis the queue is longer. At the entrance I passed between a pair of soldiers throwing watchful glances over the slowly moving column. They are careful about hidden arms ever since the day when a deranged German engineer tried to smash the plate-glass coffin with a hammer.

The only decoration in the foyer was the emblem of the Soviet Union, the Hammer and Sickle, depicted over the world in the rays of the rising sun, flanked by sheaves of corn and surmounted by a five-pointed star. Underneath is written, in the languages of the eleven Union Republics : "Workers of the World, Unite."

There were thermometers on the walls, as the temperature has to be kept constant. It is for this reason that the tomb can only be open for two hours a day.

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Descending into the vault itself, we filed slowly round three sides of the plate-glass coffin where Nickolai Lenin lies, dressed in a greyish military uniform with just his head and shoulders showing. His hands are lying by his sides, the crossed ecclesiastical position having been carefully avoided. Over his feet lies the original flag of the 1870 Paris Commune.

There is something magnetic in that pale, waxy face and domed, intellectual forehead. Every eye was devoutly fixed on those immobile features. If the guard had not stopped them, many of those worshippers would have walked blindly on, straight into the opposite wall. I came out into the wintry sunshine, feeling that I had seen, for the first time, a simple, devout people paying their homage to the man they revered.

One of the two great days of celebration in the Soviet Union is the First of May. Not only is the First of May a public holiday, but the 2nd and 3rd are as well ; when I got to know the quantity of vodka consumed in Orekhovo on the evening of May the First, I realised why the 2nd and 3rd also had to be holidays.

I had arranged with Adler that I could come with him and take part in the march past through the Red Square. I wanted to see "Uncle Joseph," as Stalin is usually irreverently called. Adler had warned me to come up in good time as there would be no transport in Moscow that morning.

So I got up at 3.30, breakfasted off black bread and curds, which is far more appetising than it sounds, walked from Dubrovka to Orekhovo, and caught the five o'clock train to Moscow. I travelled down to Moscow opposite an old peasant woman, who, to my undisguised envy, spent most of her time eating walnuts and cracking the shells with her teeth.

The streets of Dubrovka and Orekhovo and all the little villages down the line to Moscow were decorated with red flags and banners, portraits of Lenin, Stalin,

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Marx and Engels, and slogans of international solidarity: "Greetings to the heroic defenders of Republican Spain," "Rot Front," the German greeting, and many others. In every town and village there were miniature processions like the great one in Moscow, and speeches were made by the mayor, or his Russian equivalent, the president of the local Soviet.

On arrival in Moscow I walked to Adler's house, passing on the way squadrons of Cossack cavalry on their glossy brown horses, wearing black cloaks lined with scarlet and little round, black fur hats. In contrast to their supple elegance stood rows of powerful, ugly tanks and armoured cars all lined up ready to take part in the parade.

Adler and I paraded with the staff of his newspaper, the *Moscow Daily News*, and of a number of allied trusts printing newspapers in foreign languages. Many of the staff of the *Moscow Daily News* were Americans or of American birth. We met outside their offices and I was glad to accept a second breakfast from Adler at the canteen; thus fortified we formed up with the others, ten abreast, about six hundred strong, and marched through the streets of Moscow towards the Red Square. There were long pauses during which columns from other quarters filed past us and got into their positions. We took these opportunities to break column and get soft drinks and refreshments from the stalls and kiosks on the route. No alcoholic liquors were available in Moscow till the march past was over at six o'clock.

Some of the marchers carried banners with white lettering on red backgrounds—"Greetings to Comrade Stalin," "Hail to the new Constitution"—others carried bunches of flowers, and many were wearing little red "Spanish" hats rather like glengarries. Moscow was decorated to the very house-tops, every lamp-post carried its weight of bunting, every street was a blaze

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of red. As one of the Americans wittily put it : " Say if they were to let a bull loose just now, I guess he'd have heart failure from sheer indecision."

As I looked at the sea of happy faces all round me I wondered : " Is this happiness real or just a temporary affected cheerfulness ? " Adler supplied the answer to my unspoken question.

" I took part," he said, " in this same First of May parade in 1923. Then, one person in every ten had something on his feet."

And I realised that from a level of existence when nine people out of ten in the capital city were barefoot they had risen to their present sufficient, if not yet comfortable, standard of living.

The Russian people are thankful for small mercies ; there have been many years when there were not even those.

After the Red Army, infantry, tanks, and cavalry had paraded, and the Air Force had flown overhead, the general populace of Moscow marched, in their turn, through the Red Square. We tried to count the Air Force as they flew overhead, but got as far as 860 and gave it up as a bad job. The usual estimate is between six and seven thousand machines.

Our column reached the Red Square soon after midday and I found it even more brightly decorated than anywhere else ; all across the long side opposite the Kremlin were immense placards or red cloth, with the Communist slogan in the six languages, French, German, Spanish, Chinese, Russian, and English, " Workers of the World, Unite," and I wondered how the military attachés from all over the world had enjoyed the spectacle of the impassive strength of the Red Army against that background.

The columns of Moscow's citizens came converging in from ten directions, each in column of ten, making a hundred abreast in all in the Red Square. We had



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been singing popular songs in small groups as we had marched along, but on coming into the Red Square itself we all broke into the "Internationale."

We were in the third column and I could see Stalin clearly from about twenty-five yards' range as he reviewed the march-past from the platform on Lenin's mausoleum. He waved back to the continuously cheering crowds, a bluff figure in a military greatcoat. He looked quite human, rather grandfatherly.

With him on the rostrum were Voroshiloff, Commissar for Defence, always one of his closest associates ; Molotov, Chairman of the Council of People's Commissars ; Kalinin, President of the Supreme Soviet ; Kaganovich, then in charge of Transport, but shortly to be transferred to Heavy Industry ; Yezhoff, Commissar for Home Affairs, successor to Yagoda, a tiny, very dapper man ; and many other high officials.

Hearing that Kalinin and Molotov respectively seemed to hold the two highest positions in the Soviet Government, I asked what was Stalin's exact position. He has no official position in the Government at all, but prefers to exercise his control from his position as Secretary of the Party Committee.

We dispersed soon after leaving the Red Square and made our individual ways home. Adler was thankful to find a bench in the park and rest. He had chosen this of all days to break in a new pair of shoes. I marvelled at the police organisation that had been able to control the two million marchers that took part in that parade with so little confusion. It amazed me, too, that I had not been searched for bombs or concealed arms.

I returned with Adler to his home, and played chess with him till he had recovered from his foot-weariness and went out again after supper to see the rejoicings in the streets of Moscow. The main squares were lit up with little coloured lanterns, and jazz, both Soviet

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and foreign, blared out from a hundred loud-speakers. In the Red Square a searchlight picked out the red, five-pointed stars that had recently replaced the golden crosses on the higher Kremlin spires. The Grand Theatre had also been specially decorated for the occasion and a statue of four prancing horses stood out most effectively against a background of floodlit red cloth.

When the earlier, more crowded trains had gone, I returned to Orekhovo and walked slowly back to Dubrovka under the stars, shining brilliantly in the frosty air, and crept thankfully back into my bed that I had left some twenty-four eventful hours earlier.

PETER FRANCIS, *I Worked in a Soviet Factory* (1939)

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EVERYONE is a romantic, though in some the romanticism is of a perverted and paradoxical kind. And for a romantic it is, after all, something to stand in the sunlight beside the Trans-Siberian Express with the casually proprietorial air of the passenger, and to reflect that that long raking chain of steel and wood and glass is to go swinging and clattering out of the West into the East, carrying you with it. The metals curve glinting into the distance, a slender bridge between two different worlds. In eight days you will be in Manchuria. Eight days of solid travel: none of those spectacular but unrevealing leaps and bounds which the aeroplane, that agent of superficiality, to-day makes possible. The arrogance of the hard-bitten descends on you. You recall your friends in England, whom only the prospect of shooting grouse can reconcile to eight hours in the train without complaint. Eight *hours* indeed. . . . You smile contemptuously.

Besides, the dignity, or at least the glamour of trains

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has lately been enhanced. *Shanghai Express*, *Rome Express*, *Stamboul Train*—these and others have successfully exploited its potentialities as a setting for adventure and romance. In fiction, drama, and the films there has been a firmer tone in *Wagon Litts* than ever since the early days of *Oppenheim*. Complacently you weigh your chances of a foreign countess, the secret emissary of a Certain Power, her corsage stuffed with documents of the first political importance. Will anyone mistake you for No. 37, whose real name no one knows, and who is practically always in a train, being “whirled” somewhere? You have an intoxicating vision of drugged liqueurs, rifled dispatch-cases, lights suddenly extinguished, and the door-handles turning slowly under the bright eye of an automatic. . . .

You have this vision, at least, if you have not been that way before. I had. For me there were no thrills of discovery and anticipation. One hears of time standing still; in my case it took two paces smartly to the rear. As I settled down in my compartment, and the train pulled out through shoddy suburbs into a country clothed in birch and fir, the unreal rhythm of train-life was resumed as though it had never been broken. The nondescript smell of the upholstery, the unrelenting rattle of our progress, the tall glass of weak tea in its metal holder, the unshaven jowls and fatuous but friendly smile of the little attendant who brought it—all these unmemorable components of a former routine, suddenly resurrected, blotted out the interim between this journey and the last. The inconsequent comedy of two years, with the drab or coloured places, the cities and the forests, where it had been played, became for a moment as though it had never been. This small, timeless, moving cell I recognised as my home and my doom. I felt as if I had always been on the Trans-Siberian Express.

The dining-car was certainly unchanged. On each

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table there still ceremoniously stood two opulent black bottles of some unthinkable wine, false pledges of conviviality. They were never opened, and rarely dusted. They may contain ink, they may contain the elixir of life. I do not know. I doubt if anyone does.

Lavish but faded paper frills still clustered coyly round the pots of paper flowers, from whose sad petals the dust of two continents perpetually threatened the specific gravity of the soup. The lengthy and trilingual menu had not been revised ; 75 per cent of the dishes were still apocryphal, all the prices were exorbitant. The cruet, as before, was of interest rather to the geologist than to the gourmet. Coal dust from the Donetz Basin, tiny flakes of granite from the Urals, sand whipped by the wind all the way from the Gobi Desert—what a fascinating story that salt-cellar could have told under the microscope ! Nor was there anything different about the attendants. They still sat in huddled cabal at the far end of the car, conversing in low and disillusioned tones, while the *chef du train*, a potent gnome-like man, played on his abacus a slow significant tattoo. Their surliness went no deeper than the grime upon their faces ; they were always ready to be amused by one's struggles with the language or the cooking. Sign-language they interpreted with more eagerness than apprehension ; as when my desire for a hard-boiled egg—no easy request, when you come to think of it, to make in pantomime—was fulfilled, three-quarters of an hour after it had been expressed, by the appearance of a whole roast fowl.

The only change of which I was aware was in my stable companion. Two years ago it had been a young Australian, a man much preoccupied with the remoter contingencies of travel. "Supposing," he would muse, "the train breaks down, will there be danger of attack by wolves ?" When he undressed he panted fiercely, as though wrestling with the invisible Fiend ; he had

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a plaintive voice, and on his lips the words "nasal douche" (the mere sound of Siberia had given him a cold) had the saddest cadence you can imagine. This time it was a young Russian, about whom I remember nothing at all. Nor is this surprising, for I never found out anything about him. He spoke no English, and I spoke hardly any Russian. A phrase-book bought in Moscow failed to bridge the gap between us. An admirable compilation in many ways, it did not, I discovered, equip one for casual conversation with a stranger. There was a certain petulance, a touch of the imperious and exorbitant, about such observations as: "Show me the manager, the assistant manager, the water closet, Lenin's Tomb," and "Please to bring me tea, coffee, beer, vodka, cognac, Caucasian red wine, Caucasian white wine." Besides, a lot of the questions, like "Can you direct me to the Palace of the Soviets?" and "Why must I work for a World Revolution?" were not the sort of things I wanted to ask; and most of the plain statements of fact—such as "I am an American engineer who loves Russia" and "I wish to study Architecture, Medicine, Banking under the best teachers, please"—would have been misleading. I did not want to mislead him.

So for two days we grinned and nodded and got out of each other's way and watched each other incuriously, in silence. On the second day he left the train, and after that I had the compartment to myself.

There is a great deal to be said against trains, but it will not be said by me. I like the Trans-Siberian Railway. It is a confession of weakness, I know; but it is sincere.

You wake up in the morning. Your watch says it is eight o'clock; but you are travelling east, and you know that it is really nine, though you might be hard put to it to explain why this is so. Your berth is comfortable. There is no need to get up, and no incentive either. You have nothing to look forward to, nothing

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to avoid. No assets, no liabilities.

If you were on a ship, there would be any number of both. A whacking great breakfast, sunny decks, the swimming bath, that brilliant short story you are going to write, the dazzling creature whose intuitive admiration for your writings you would be the last to undermine—these are among the assets. Liabilities include the ante-final of the deck quoits, the man who once landed on Easter Island, the ship's concert, dressing for dinner, and boat-drill.

At first the balance-sheet strikes you as sound. But gradually as the tedious days become interminable weeks, the traitorous assets insensibly change sides and swell the ranks of the liabilities. A time comes when there is nothing to look forward to, everything to avoid. That brilliant short story, still-born, weighs upon your conscience, a succession of whacking great breakfasts upon your digestion ; the sunny decks are now uncomfortably so, and even the swimming bath has been rendered for practical purposes inaccessible by that dazzling creature whose intuitive admiration for your writings you have been the first to undermine. At sea there is always a catch somewhere, as Columbus bitterly remarked on sighting America.

But on the Trans-Siberian Railway there are neither ups nor downs. You are a prisoner, narrowly confined. At sea you are a prisoner too, but a prisoner with just enough rope to strangle at birth the impulses of restlessness or inspiration. The prisoner sits down to write, then thinks it would be more pleasant on deck. On deck there is a wind ; his papers are unmanageable. With a sigh he takes up a book, a heavy book, a book which it will do him good to read. After four pages there comes an invitation to deck-tennis. He cannot refuse. He goes below to change, comes up again, and desultorily plays. There follows conversation and a bath. The morning is over.

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The morning is over. His typewriter is in the smoking-room, his book is on B deck, his coat is on A deck, and he has lost his pipe and broken his finger-nail. In everything he has attempted he has failed. All this peace and leisure has been sterile without being enjoyable. The afternoon will be the same.

Most men, though not the best men, are happiest when the question "What shall I do?" is supererogatory. (Hence the common and usually just contention that "My school-days were the happiest days of my life.") That is why I like the Trans-Siberian Railway. You lie in your berth, justifiably inert. Past the window plains crawl and forests flicker. The sun shines weakly on an empty land. The piles of birch logs by the permanent way—silver on the outside, black where the damp butts show—give the anomalous illusion that there has been a frost. There is always a magpie in sight.

You have nothing to look at, but no reason to stop looking. You are living in a vacuum, and at last you have to invent some absurdly artificial necessity for getting up: "fifteen magpies from now," or "next time the engine whistles." For you are inwardly afraid that without some self-discipline to give it a pattern this long period of suspended animation will permanently affect your character for the worse.

So in the end you get up, washing perfunctorily in the little dark confessional which you share with the next compartment, and in the basin for which the experienced traveller brings his own plug, because the Russians, for some reason connected—strangely enough—with religion, omit to furnish these indispensable adjuncts to a careful toilet.

Then, grasping your private pot of marmalade, you lurch along to the dining-car. It is now eleven o'clock, and the dining-car is empty. You order tea and bread, and make without appetite a breakfast which is more

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than sufficient for your needs. The dining-car is almost certainly stuffy, but you have ceased to notice this. The windows are always shut, either because the weather is cold, or because it is warm and dry and therefore dusty. (Not, of course, that the shutting of them excludes the dust. Far from it. But it is at least a gesture ; it is the best that can be done.)

After that you wander back to your compartment. The *provodnik* has transformed your bed into a seat, and perhaps you hold with him some foolish conversation, in which the rudiments of three languages are prostituted in an endeavour to compliment each other on their simultaneous mastery. Then you sit down and read. You read and read and read. There are no distractions, no interruptions, no temptations to get up and do something else ; there is nothing else to do. You read as you have never read before.

And so the day passes. If you are wise you shun the regulation meal at three o'clock, which consists of five courses not easily to be identified, and during which the car is crowded and the windows blurred with steam. I had brought with me from London biscuits and potted meat and cheese ; and he is a fool who does not take at least some victuals of his own. But as a matter of fact, what with the airless atmosphere and the lack of exercise, you don't feel hungry on the Trans-Siberian Railway. A pleasant lassitude, a sense almost of disembodiment, descends on you, and the food in the dining-car, which, though seldom really bad, is never appetising and sometimes scarce, hardly attracts that vigorous criticism which it would on a shorter journey.

At the more westerly stations—there are perhaps three stops of twenty minutes every day—you pace the platforms vigorously, in a conscientious British way. But gradually this practice is abandoned. As you are drawn further into Asia, old fetishes lose their power. It becomes harder and harder to persuade yourself that



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you feel a craving for exercise, and indeed you almost forget that you ought to feel this craving. At first you are alarmed, for this is the East, the notorious East, where white men go to pieces ; you fear that you are losing your grip, that you are going native. But you do nothing about it, and soon your conscience ceases to prick and it seems quite natural to stand limply in the sunlight, owlish, frowsty; and immobile, like everybody else.

At last evening comes. The sun is setting somewhere far back along the road that you have travelled. A slanting light always lends intimacy to a landscape, and this Siberia, flecked darkly by the tapering shadows of trees, seems a place at once more friendly and more mysterious than the naked non-committal flats of noon. Your eyes are tired, and you put down your book. Against the grey and creeping distances outside memory and imagination stage in their turn the struggles of the past and of the future. For the first time loneliness descends, and you sit examining its implications until you find Siberia vanished and the grimy window offering nothing save your own face, foolish, indistinct, and as likely as not unshaved. You adjourn to the dining-car for eggs.

That is what a journey on the Trans-Siberian Railway is like, if you make it alone.

And now the journey was almost over. To-morrow we should reach Manchuli. The train pulled out of Irkutsk, and ran along the river Angara until it debouched into Lake Baikal. At the mouth of the river men were fishing, each in a little coracle moored to a stake at which the current tugged. It was a clear and lovely evening.

Lake Baikal is said to be the deepest lake in the world. It is also said to be the size of Belgium. Its waters are cold and uncannily pellucid. The Russians call it " The

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White-Haired," because of the mist which always hangs about it. To-night the mist was limited to narrow decorative scarves which floated with a fantastic appearance of solidity far out above the unruffled waters. Out of the mist stood up the heads of distant mountains, dappled with snow. It was a peaceful, majestic place.

Contrary to general belief, the railway round the southern end of Lake Baikal is double-tracked, as indeed is the whole Trans-Siberian line from Chita westward to Omsk, and doubtless by now further. This is, however, a very vulnerable section. The train crawls tortuously along the shore, at the foot of great cliffs. The old line passes through about forty short tunnels, each lackadaisically guarded by a sentry. The new line skirts round the outside of the tunnels, between the water and the rock. This is the weakest link in that long, tenuous, and somewhat rusty chain by which hangs the life of Russia's armies in the Far East. In 1933 her military establishments on the Amur Frontier totalled about a quarter of a million men, including reservists.

There is no more luxurious sensation than what may be described as the End of Term Feeling. The traditional scurrilities of

" This time to-morrow where shall I be ?  
Not in this academe "

have accompanied delights as keen and unqualified as any that most of us will ever know. As we left Baikal behind and went lurching through the operatic passes of Buriat Mongolia, I felt very content. To-morrow we should reach the frontier. After to-morrow there would be no more of that black bread, in consistency and flavour suggesting rancid peat : no more of that equally alluvial tea : no more of a Trappist's existence, no more days entirely blank of action. It was true that I did not know what I was going to do, that I had

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nothing very specific to look forward to. But I knew what I was going to stop doing, and that, for the moment was enough.

I undressed and got into bed. As I did so, I noticed for the first time that the number of my berth was thirteen.

For a long time I could not go to sleep. I counted sheep, I counted weasels (I find them much more efficacious, as a rule. I don't know why). I recited in a loud, angry voice soporific passages from Shakespeare. I intoned the names of stations we had passed through since leaving Moscow: Bui, Perm, Omsk, Tomsk, Kansk, Krasnoyarsk. (At one a low-hung rookery in birch trees, at another the chattering of swifts against a pale evening sky, had made me homesick for a moment.) I thought of all the most boring people I knew, imagining that they were in the compartment with me, and had brought their favourite subjects with them. It was no good. My mind became more and more active. Obviously I was never going to sleep. . . .

It was the Trooping of the Colour, and I was going to be late for it. There, outside, in the street below my window, was my horse; *but it was covered with thick yellow fur!* This was awful! Why hadn't it been clipped? What would they think of me coming on parade like that? Inadequately dressed though I was, I dashed out of my room and down the moving staircase. And then (horror of horrors!) the moving staircase broke. It lurched, twisted, flung me off my feet. There was a frightful jarring, followed by a crash. . . .

I sat up in my berth. From the rack high above me my heaviest suitcase, metal-bound, was cannonaded down, catching me with fearful force on either knee-cap. I was somehow not particularly surprised. This is the end of the world, I thought, and in addition they

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have broken both my legs. I had a vague sense of injustice.

My little world was tilted drunkenly. The window showed me nothing except a few square yards of goodish grazing, of which it offered an oblique bird's-eye view. Larks were singing somewhere. It was six o'clock. I began to dress. I now felt very much annoyed.

But I climbed out of the carriage into a refreshingly spectacular world, and the annoyance passed. The Trans-Siberian Express sprawled foolishly down the embankment. The mail van and the dining-car, which had been in front, lay on their sides at the bottom. Behind them the five sleeping-cars, headed by my own, were disposed in attitudes which became less and less grotesque until you got to the last, which had remained, primly, on the rails. Fifty yards down the line the engine, which had parted company with the train, was dug in, snorting, on top of the embankment. It had a truculent and naughty look ; it was defiantly conscious of indiscretion.

It would be difficult to imagine a nicer sort of railway accident. The weather was ideal. No one was badly hurt. And the whole thing was done in just the right Drury Lane manner, with lots of twisted steel and splintered woodwork and turf scarred deeply with demoniac force. For once the Russians had carried something off.

The air was full of agonising groans and the sound of breaking glass, the first supplied by two attendants who had been winded, the second by passengers escaping from a coach in which both the doors had jammed. The sun shone brightly. I began to take photographs as fast as I could. This is strictly forbidden on Soviet territory, but the officials had their hands full and were too upset to notice.

The staff of the train were scattered about the wreckage, writing contradictory reports with trembling hands.

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A charming German consul and his family—the only other foreigners on the train—had been in the last coach and were unscathed. Their small daughter, aged six, was delighted with the whole affair, which she regarded as having been arranged specially for her entertainment ; I am afraid she will grow up to expect too much from trains.

Gradually I discovered what had happened, or at least what was thought to have happened. As a rule the Trans-Siberian Expresses have no great turn of speed, but ours, at the time when disaster overtook her, had been on top of her form. She had a long, steep hill behind her, and also a following wind ; she was giving of her best. But, alas, at the bottom of that long, steep hill the signals were against her, a fact which the driver noticed in the course of time. He put on his brakes. Nothing happened. He put on his emergency brakes. Still nothing happened. Slightly less rapidly than before, but still at a very creditable speed, the train went charging down the long, steep hill.

The line at this point is single track, but at the foot of the hill there is a little halt, where a train may stand and let another pass. Our train, however, was in no mood for stopping ; it looked as if she was going to ignore the signals and try conclusions with a west-bound train, head on. In this she was thwarted by a pointsman at the little halt, who summed up the situation and switched the runaway neatly into a siding. It was a long, curved siding, and to my layman's eye appeared to have been designed for the sole purpose of receiving trains which got out of control on the hill above it. But for whatever purpose it was designed, it was designed a very long time ago. Its permanent way had a more precarious claim to that epithet than is usual even in Russia. We were altogether too much for the siding. We made matchwood of its rotten sleepers and flung ourselves dramatically down the embankment.

## TRANS-SIBERIAN EXPRESS

But it had been great fun : a comical and violent climax to an interlude in which comedy and violence had been altogether too lacking for my taste. It was good to lie back in the long grass on a little ~~knell~~ and meditate upon that sprawling scrap-heap, that study in perdition. There she lay, in the middle of a wide green plain : the crack train, the Trans-Siberian Luxury Express. For more than a week she had bullied us. She had knocked us about when we tried to clean our teeth, she had jogged our elbows when we wrote, and when we read she had made the print dance tiresomely before our eyes. Her whistle had arbitrarily curtailed our frenzied excursions on the wayside platforms. Her windows we might not open on account of the dust, and when closed they had proved a perpetual attraction to small sabotaging boys with stones. She had annoyed us in a hundred little ways : by spilling tea in our laps, by running out of butter, by regulating her life in accordance with Moscow time, now six hours behind the sun. She had been our prison, our Little Ease. We had not liked her.

Now she was down and out. We left her lying there, a broken, buckled toy, a thick black worm without a head, awkwardly twisted : a thing of no use, above which larks sang in an empty plain.

If I know Russia, she is lying there still.

It was, as I say, an ideal railway accident. We suffered only four hours' delay. They found another engine. They dragged that last, that rather self-righteous coach back on to the main line. From the wrecked dining-car stale biscuits were considerately produced. In a sadly truncated train the Germans, a few important officials and myself proceeded on our way. Our fellow-passengers we left behind. They did not seem to care.

PETER FLEMING, *One's Company* (1934)

## MODERN TRAVEL

### CHANG AND THE CHINESE

IT must have been during the morning of the second or third day of the first week spent in the house in the Kan-Yu Hutung that, as I wrote near the window, an intermittent music floated down from the sky and drew me out into the court to see what it could be. High up, alternately dark or smoky against the blue dome that in this atmosphere appeared taut and brittle as glass, a flock of birds was manœuvring. When the creatures sped in a straight line the music came low and regular, like that of a distant rocket in ascent, only fainter, but with each turn in their flight it grew of a sudden stronger, and seemed to contain a note, also, of menace such as I had heard in no bird-song heretofore. I could not quite solve the mystery. The birds were too high up for me to be able to identify them, and I judged it singular that this fluting should be at its loudest during the very moment of their circlings and loopings: could it be due to the pleasure, perhaps, which they took in their own evolutions? . . . At this instant Chang, my Chinese servant, came out, and remarked in a gratified voice:—

“Master worry and puzzle: has not heard pigeons make whistle music before?”

And, indeed, I had not. . . . Nor had any of my friends acquainted with China ever warned me of it, or told me of the technique the Chinese employed, of how they tie whistles to the bodies of the pigeons, so that the rush of their flight produces these strains,\* or of how a boy, carrying a flag of some colour which, through

\* Messrs. Arlington and Lewisohn, in their *In Search of Old Peking* (Henri Vetch, Peking, 1935), say that to the Chinese the appeal of this sort of pigeon-flying, apart from its music, consists in “watching the flock circling round, sometimes standing out black against the sky, and then suddenly almost invisible, according as the sunlight catches them . . .” (p. 228).

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training, the birds are able to recognise, runs along the ground far beneath them, to indicate the line of their passage, to keep them aloft as long as their owner wishes and, finally, to guide them safely home again. Indeed, our friend Lich'en, to whom we have recourse so often, appears to have regarded the entangling of pigeons with musical instruments as a duty, for he announces categorically,\* "Whenever the pigeons are let out to fly, bamboo whistles should be attached to their tails." He goes on to explain that the instruments are of two kinds, the first, the *hu-lu*, being divided merely into large and small whistles, while the second comprises subdivisions of a much more complicated and diverse nature, including, under its designation of *shao-tzu*, whistles of three pipes clamped together, or of five, or eleven or thirteen double pipes, of some with obstructed openings, and of others that consist of many large tubes surrounding a single large one in the centre. "When the pigeons wheel overhead," he continues, "their sound rises even to the clouds, containing within it all five notes.† Truly it gives joy, and a release to the emotions !"

The emotions to which, in my case, it had given release were those of surprise and bewilderment ; but then, how, before reading the delightful pages of Lich'en, could I have known the extent to which the peristeronic art had been cultivated in Peking, any more than the strange ways in which the birds had been employed ? For example, in former years, some of them were taught to steal. They were trained to fly, directly they were set loose, straight to the Imperial granaries and swallow

\* This and subsequent quotations, as well as the list of names of pigeons, is taken from Tun Lich'en's *Annual Customs and Festivals in Peking*, pp. 22, 113-114 : but sometimes, in the list, I have taken the liberty of altering from plural to singular, for the sake of sound, or for the consistency of my book ; from *Purple jade wings* to *Purple Jade Wing*, for example.

† Of the Chinese scale.



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as much of the finest rice as their crops, artificially distended, would receive. When these "Food Distributors"—as, with the Chinese sense of euphemism, they were termed—returned home from their raids, they were dosed with alum and water, and made literally to disgorge their booty. After being washed, the rice would then be sold. The proprietors counted on a flock of a hundred pigeons bringing home fifty pounds of rice a day.\* How clearly has this device been invented by the same race which evolved the ingenious use of the cormorant for fishing !

As for the numbers of pigeons, they were countless, dividing the sky of Peking with the kites flown by children. Their varieties, also, were many. Among the more common, Lich'en enumerates the Dotted One, Jade-Wing, Phoenix-Headed White, Two-Headed Black, Small Ash-Black, Purple Sauce, Snow Flower, Silver Tail, Four-Piece Jade, Magpie Flower, Heel and Head, Flowery Neck, and Taoist Priest Hat, while in addition to two very rare kinds with plumage the colour of gold, the more select comprised Toad-Eyed Grey, Iron Ox, Short-Beaked White, Crane's Elegance, Azure Plumage, Egret White, Black Ox, Bronze Back, Mottled Back, Silver Back, Square-Edged Unicorn, Blue Plate, Striped Sandal, Cloud Plate, Purple Black One, Purple Dotted One, Parrot-Beak White, Parrot-Beak Spotted, Purple Jade Wing, Iron-Winged, Jade Circlet and Wild Duck of the Great Dipper. . . . I like to think that those I saw so high up, wheeling and whistling, were a flock of Square-Edged Unicorns, or, if common they must be, of Phoenix-Headed Whites ; but probably they were only Magpie Flowers.

One thing, at least, was certain about this new form of entertainment ; to whatever variety the birds may have belonged, or whatever the method of their training,

\* See *In Search of Old Peking*, by L. C. Arlington and William Lewisohn, pp. 227-228.

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Chang enjoyed, even more than the music of their flight, my obvious surprise at it. Though tall, with an almost episcopal dignity of mien as he swept in and out of the rooms in his long robe, he liked to giggle to himself a little whenever a white employer plainly betrayed his ignorance. It was not a rude titter. Pleasure, it is true, entered into the composition of it, but the chief emotions conveyed were those of pity, and of fear concerning how my lack of knowledge of the world and its ways might not next evince itself and thereby, perhaps, damage my career. . . . Thus I remember, a day or two after I arrived, calling him into my room to help me deal with a singular monster that was clattering about on the floor with a noise, as it sidled and darted, like a walking coal-scuttle; an enormous, crab-like beetle, encased in a cuirass of green bronze, a full two or three inches across, and with strongly armoured legs and feet. Indeed, it had frightened me, for its whole appearance was so baleful that I thought it might possibly be mortal to man. . . . Chang paused to identify this dragon, and then remarked with an air of immense superiority, "Master no like? . . . Very much prized in Chinese medicine."\* Nevertheless, sympathy was

\* The Chinese science of acupuncture, though long neglected by Western science, is now receiving considerable attention, chiefly from French doctors. It consists, in practice, of stabbing deeply, with a sharp needle, let us say a sympathetic nerve in the foot in order to cure a pain in the head.

Where medicine is concerned, the Chinese doctors make use of their own pharmacopoeia, developed empirically through a score or so of centuries, and some of the ingredients they use are naturally disconcerting to our ideas. They believe, too, in administering enormous quantities of weak medicine, usually in liquid form, as opposed to the fashion of concentrated drugs in small compass prevalent in Europe and America. They consider that, apart from the better physical results they obtain by this method, the psychological effect of having to drink two or three tumblers of medicine at a time is much more beneficial to the patient than that of swallowing quickly "a tablespoonful in a little water, thrice daily after meals."

I quote the following interesting account of how, far from any possibility of finding medical aid, Robert Fortune was cured of fever

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to be felt mixed with his contempt. (Poor barbarians, they know no better. Must try and help, must try educate.)

And, indeed, I found that talking with him un-

when staying with a priest in the temple of Tientung, near Ning-po, by a Chinese practitioner, whom he called in "with considerable reluctance." (From *A Residence Among the Chinese*, pp. 103-104. Murray, 1857.) He had been ill for some time, and when the doctor entered, was "in bed with a burning fever." In spite of never having seen an Englishman before, the doctor evidently understood our island nature, first of all by forbidding him, even when he was better, to bathe every morning in a cold stream, and subsequently by endeavouring to persuade him to moderate his diet.

"He then despatched a messenger to his house for certain medicines, and at the same time ordered a basin of strong, hot tea to be brought into the room. When this was set before him he bent his two forefingers and dipped his knuckles into the hot tea. The said knuckles were now used like a pair of pincers on my skin, under the ribs, round the back, and on several other parts of the body. Every now and then the operation of wetting them with the hot tea was repeated. He pinched and drew my skin so hard that I could scarcely refrain from crying out with pain; and . . . left marks which I did not get rid of for several weeks after.

"When the messenger arrived with the medicine, the first thing I was asked to swallow was a large paper of small pills, containing, I suppose, about a hundred, or perhaps more. 'Am I to take the whole of these?' I asked in amazement. 'Yes; and here is a cup of hot tea to wash them down.' I hesitated; then tasted one, which had a hot, peppery kind of flavour, and, making up my mind, gulped the whole. In the meantime a teapot had been procured capable of holding about three large breakfast-cups of tea. Into this pot were put six different vegetable productions—about half an ounce of each. These consisted of dried orange or citron peel, pomegranate, charred fruit of *Gardenia radicans*, the bark and wood of *Rosa Banksiana*, and two other things unknown to me. The teapot was then filled to the brim with boiling water, and allowed to stand for a few minutes, when the decoction was ready for the patient. I was now desired to drink it cup after cup as fast as possible, and then cover myself over with all the blankets which could be laid hold of. . . ."

After this, there was no recurrence of the fever, and a precisely similar treatment administered three days later completed the cure.

Fortune adds, ". . . I am inclined to think more highly of their [the Chinese doctors'] skill than people generally give them credit for. . . . When I first came to China, a celebrated practitioner in Hongkong, now no more, gravely informed me the Chinese doctors gathered all sorts of herbs indiscriminately, and used them *en masse*,

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doubtedly aided my education. Whatever may be urged against servants—and I refuse, not from snobbishness, or from anything but an esthetic feeling for the use of words, to insult them by writing “domestics” or such bastard terms as “lady help” or “gentleman assistant”—, that they undermine self-reliance in those waited upon, and encourage servility in those that wait, that such labour degrades man, and all the rest of that pompous humbug which recurrently emerges into the correspondence columns of the daily press, it must be allowed that in former days, when a country gentleman lived in a house peopled with servants, they acted as a conductor from his earliest years between the son of the house and the workers. From them he learnt how others lived, and how they talked and felt, just as he learnt French, let us say, from a French nurse or governess. Thus the wisdom of the aristocrat, if he should chance to be wise, and his folly, if he should chance to be foolish, had equally been learnt below stairs, in pantry or living-room. And the wisdom, if it survived, was one that cannot be learned from labour-saving devices, however enlightened the age. (It may be noticed, too, that true wisdom—as opposed to cleverness—seems to have flourished no less in times when few people, comparatively, could read or write, than in the present day, when all can read papers and write books.) And still, for those writers and artists who cannot give all their time to exchanges of intimate confidences in public-houses, and are equally determined, too, to take no part in the “Class Struggle,” servants

upon the principle that if one thing did not answer the purpose another would. Nothing can be further from the truth. . . . Being a very ancient nation,” he continues, “many discoveries have been made and carefully handed down from father to son which are not to be despised. . . .” In China I have heard it stated that one particular medical secret, of how to cure some special illness or disability, may form the patrimony of a whole family; the members of which, therefore, will under no circumstances consent to disclose it.

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represent a store of popular feeling and consciousness with which it is well to keep in touch. . . . Thus from observing the ways of Chinese servants, I grew to understand certain things about China and Chinese feeling and, through talking with them—and, more especially, with Chang—, began to appreciate several points in the national character ; such, for example, as that method of indirect approach to a subject, which comes so naturally to the Oriental, but remains so alien to our unsubtle minds.

It cannot be denied, I think, that this habit of the indirect approach in speech has its drawbacks for those not accustomed to it. The Chinese is always on the look-out for it, expecting it from the foreigner as much as from men of his own blood. And so it was that, one day, when I was handed by mistake some letters addressed to my landlord, and laid them down on the table, saying to myself idly at the same time, " Well, I wonder what they are about," Chang naturally concluded my words to be an injunction to him, and, before I had realised what he was doing, had torn open the envelopes and was informing me of their contents.

Often, too, from talking to him, I obtained in part a conception of how the Chinese regard the various actions of men, placing thereon a value entirely different to ours. Thus, one morning, he remarked to me, by way of opening a conversation :—

" Master interested in army ? "

" No."

Not at all discouraged, he continued proudly, " My uncle a General in Chinese Army."

I betrayed no surprise, for it was proverbial in the foreign colony here that, since the Civil Wars had started, every Peking houseboy boasted a father or uncle who was a General on either one side or the other ; sometimes on both.

" Uncle very patriotic man," he went on.

" I am sure he is," I replied commendingly.

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"Yes, the Japanese they offer him one whole hundred thousand dollars to help them."

"And he refused it," I said, finishing the sentence for him.

For a moment I saw the shocked expression that always appeared on it when his sense of thrift was in any way thwarted, cross his face, and then he cried out with anguished patriotism,

"No, no, Master! He take money, and then run home."

"*Malbrouck s'en va-t-en guerre*," I sang to myself happily, for I seized his point. Always it had been my opinion that the great Duke of Marlborough had proved himself twice as good a patriot—and commander—as the ordinary English general, if it were true, as tradition maintained, that, besides vanquishing Louis XIV, he had first accepted from him large bribes to let the French win; for in that case he had inflicted upon the Sun-King a double defeat, one financial, the other in the field. And I had regretted accordingly any attempt, even by pious descendants, to palliate or dispel such stories, whether myth or reality. An example of this kind should not be destroyed. During the last war, how often had I not wished that the English generals, models of national probity, would both accept bribes from the Kaiser and be content to sacrifice fewer English soldiers: for, after all, a man who has bought a battle expects to win it, and will be twice as dismayed when he sees that, far from being dormant, the troops of his enemy intend to win. "*Malbrouck s'en va-t-en guerre!*"

But, to return to our conversations, one day, several weeks later, I said:—

"Chang, can you find a photographer for me? I want him to come here to take a group of all of you in the courtyard."

"Very easy for me. I own photoglyphic business—but no one know."

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(At this point it should be added that, when the photographs were finished, anyone who saw them would have been able at once to guess the secret. Every other face in the group came out lined and seared, whereas the camera man had, with a terrible sycophancy, touched up Chang's countenance to that of a Chinese Adonis. Contrarily, his enemy, the cook—a genius in his own way—who, old and by no means handsome, possessed a certain presence, as of a philosopher, a certain air of ponderous and austere benignity, combined with intellect, that gave him, except for his colouring, somewhat the same appearance as the late Lord Haldane, was transformed in it into the likeness of a malicious and idiot gnome.)

“Very easy,” Chang repeated.

“But, good heavens,” I said, interested at once, for by this time we were on very good terms, and I was consequently surprised that I had heard nothing of this concern before, “you’ve kept very quiet about it. Next, you’ll be telling me you’ve got another business as well.”

“Yes. A photoglaph business in Jehol, and two silk business with brother in Mukden.”

“Is that all?”

“No. Two silk business in Tienstin, and one fruit business with nother brother in Harbin.”

“And others as well, I suppose?”

“No : no more : no more stores : only two restaurants in Shanghai and one, very big, in Hong Kong.”

“But you must be a rich man, Chang ; why do you work like this ?”

“In Peking this no time for big people : this time for little man. Make myself small. . . . And not rich, not rich at all. Price of eggs dleadful now : twelve a penny !”

Nor, I am persuaded, were his enterprises by any means confined to those he had named. (I suspect his brother's farm, concerning the merits of which I used

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to hear frequently.) Moreover, he had other possessions.

A few days later, he had come into my room and had hovered about with a peculiar air. I could tell, from experience, that he wished to approach me, and I could see that he was turning some problem over in his mind. But when at last he spoke, his meaning was so remote from usual domestic matters that, in my stupidity, he found it for a considerable time difficult to make his meaning clear to me : but I can only suggest here the amount of his circumlocution. . . . It appeared to him that I walked too much for my health. It was very tiring, and he was sure that I was not strong. No one who used his brain should walk much. . . . Besides, it was silly to walk. Why walk, when you could drive ? People here looked down on pedestrians : and Chinese servants thought that, if a European used his feet, it was because he could not *afford* to drive. (Many Chinese servants very wicked, look out for nasty things to say. Hollid servants in this street. . . .) Gradually it became plain, however, that his acquaintances were taunting him with serving a master who could not afford a motor, and that, as my personal servant, he felt humiliated. He had, I think, suffered considerably and quite genuinely. . . . And now he was circling nearer and nearer to his object, which was to tell me that he owned a motor (though this again must constitute, of course, a secret between us), and that, if I feared the expense of hiring one—or if, as he put it, I found the cars of Peking inferior to those to which I was accustomed—he would be delighted to place it at my disposal for so long as I liked, free of charge, if I would just pay the cost of the petrol. Then, when I wanted to see a temple, I could drive there, allowing him to occupy the seat next the chauffeur, so that he could be recognised, and all this unpleasant backbiting would stop. . . . After this, we often went out for trips together.



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It was an open motor : and I think, too, that he enjoyed taking the air—the Chinese love picnics and expeditions of any sort—but had hardly dared previously to be seen in it, lest, without me, inquisitive fellow-servants should solve the mystery of its ownership. And there existed, I am sure, a further reason for his liking to drive with me ; he could not endure the uncertainty as to where I might be going. For he manifested a full share of another national characteristic, intense curiosity. This directed itself impartially to all things, whether important or unimportant. . . . For example, the only times I ever saw suffering plainly written upon his face, occurred when he knew I was going to dine out, but did not know where or with whom. Deliberately, I would at first tantalise him, but in the end pity for his obvious distress always overcame me, and I would enlighten him—except on one occasion, when the spirit of scientific inquiry hardened my original resolve *not* always to give way to Chang in this fashion. One ought, I felt persuaded, to keep him in ignorance, if only once, in order to see what he would do, how he would deal with this new situation. . . . So I said nothing. Just as we were leaving the house, however, he came up to me, walking very fast, and said, frankly, imploringly, as if placing his whole future in my hands, “*Please* tell me where Master dine. No one know. Can find out nothing from nobody. . . .” So plainly was he at the end of his endurance that, even then, I could not find it any longer in my heart to refuse him the information. . . . And, as it was, the state of suspense to which for a whole day he had been subjected, must have wrought on his nerves more than I had realised at the time. The next morning he fell ill with a short, very violent attack of influenza, and had to swallow whole demijohns full of ancient remedies, and be treated by a Chinese doctor with acupuncture before he recovered. I had, I suppose, lowered his power of resistance. Nevertheless, consider-

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ing how ill he appeared to be, he was about again remarkably quickly.

These talks and incidents are reproduced solely because, reflecting upon them afterward, they appeared really to afford a clue to the outlook and working of the mind, where both political and everyday conduct is concerned, of the ordinary citizen of Peking. Just as one has only to exteriorise such processes, to look at a goldfish, a flowering tree or a Pekingese dog, to be convinced, once and for all, of the difference between them and their equivalents in Europe, so with the ways of thinking which, over a long period, produced these objects and creatures. . . . Thus, for example, I do not believe that either Emperor or Republic, or any General, was ever popular in Peking. It must be remembered that the former Emperors of the Manchu Dynasty were never "Chinese Emperors," as they are often loosely called, but Emperors *of* China; originally they had belonged to one more of the several foreign dynasties, ruling over savage tribes, which had imposed themselves by force (and the Chinese, though tolerant, despise both foreigners and force) for a term of two or three centuries upon a peaceful people; while, on the other hand, the Republic was a new idea (and the majority of Chinese are by nature violently opposed to new ideas). As for the Generals in the Civil War, one was as good as another. And so, in Peking, all kinds of flags, in addition to Imperial and Republican, were always, though ingeniously, hidden, kept in readiness in nearly every house, in case they should be wanted: for, to the Chinese, the way of the Vicar of Bray is the Path not only of Wisdom, but of Virtue, and I am only surprised that there is not a temple to that ecclesiastic among those countless shrines to strange gods that are to be found everywhere in Peking. Because you should, they hold, as a matter of principle, accept, and adapt yourself to, events and not hurl yourself suicidally against

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them. . . . Thus the citizens of Peking are willing to hang out any flags required by expediency, and to render unto Caesar even the things which are not Caesar's, if he demands them. Whichever—or whoever—entered the city in triumph would be received with triumph ; but it would signify nothing, except a certain characteristic enjoyment of pageantry. For the rest, people will fall in with almost any plan for their own domination, or regeneration, because they know that in the end it will fail. They have seen so much in the long life of their country. Upon one thing only are they united and resolute ; they will not allow outside events to break in upon their lives. Even so rigid a faith as Communism, if for the sake of convenience it had temporarily to be accepted, would find itself powerless to alter the national character : on the contrary, the national character would very soon modify Communism to suit itself, or even assimilate it, as it has always assimilated foreign conquerors.

The professors and students alone are patriotic in the Western sense of the word patriotism : and the young students, tired of the picture of national disintegration which the course of their lifetimes has afforded them, often incline to Communism as to the only new and untried faith : but they are young men and women with a mind for abstractions. All that the ordinary Chinese, and, not least, the ordinary citizen of Peking, demands or desires is to be allowed to proceed with his own life in his own way, and, further, to be allowed to adapt his natural artistry to his trade (it must be repeated that he approaches every trade, whether boot-making or banking, from the angle of the artist). Thus no system can flourish here for long, unless it allow the average man sufficient scope for his instinct for profits, and for an individuality so intense that it makes itself felt in every child at the earliest age.

That toward the Japanese, the Chinese entertain a

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profound hatred and allied feelings of fear and contempt, I have no doubt (and yet, since each comprehends the other much better than he will ever comprehend a European—or the nearer Indian—there is always the possibility, if temper calms and megalomania recedes, of an understanding between them). Even when I was in Peking, a year or two before the unprovoked Japanese assault on China, the Japanese were already entrenched there, constituted already the real executive and motive-power. Their soldiers marched everywhere wearing pads over their mouths to guard them against alien contamination, I suppose. But by the Chinese they were treated as a secret, as something it was scarcely decent to see or mention ; much as, in Wells' *Time Machine*, the underground cannibal workers, who eat them, are treated by the aristocrats living on the surface.

. . . Yes, certainly they hated them : in illustration of it, I recall a curious incident. The Japanese, as we used often to be told in the days when they were our allies, are a brave little people : sometimes, however, their bravery entices them into trying to ride horses and drive machines that are too big for them (it may be, even, that China falls into this particular category). Never, then, shall I forget the rapture of a Chinese taxi-driver who was taking me to the Legation Quarter, when, in passing, we saw a diminutive Japanese soldier, on an immense, very powerful motor-bicycle, lose control of it and charge at tremendous speed into a Japanese guard outside the Embassy of Nippon. The behaviour of the sentry, thus battered and pinned against the wall, was heroic. An expression of silent pain that was almost ecstasy took possession of his face, and he did not even utter a groan. . . . But meanwhile my Chinese driver was laughing so much that he had been obliged to pull up at a corner and have his laugh out. Nor do I think that in this case it was due to the Chinese concept of pain as a fit subject for laughter (a psychological

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phenomenon to which I shall allude again shortly). No, I watched him, and I believe the idea which prompted this reaction was : "The Japanese *will* be overbearing : they will try to do too much (they've no repose) ; they have the advantage over us of being stoic, of *liking* pain and to go out and meet it half-way. . . . And now one of them has got it, right enough, and from a brother dwarf : that's the best of it ! Let's hope it will be a lesson to them."

To generalise again, the Chinese and the Japanese are like the French and the Germans. The Chinese are witty, in their lives, in the things they make, if not in their conversation, which resembles a game of cards. I pull out this card, a philosophical tag, and you pull out the opposite one, that you know by experience is the reply to it and will take the trick. For hours, they will sit upright on chairs, a hand on each knee, waiting the cue, and thoroughly enjoying their own skill in platitude. Originality here would be bad manners. Not even the most brilliant Chinese mind would care to show his quality in company. Nevertheless, their outlook is compounded of wit ; and, in addition, they are original, self-indulgent, fond of food and good things and gossip, kindly and deeply attached to their families, interested in the arts and commerce, and, though brave, too fond of life to wish to die unnecessarily. The Japanese, on the other hand, are loyal to a fault, but possess the same order of tact and wit for which the Germans are, and always have been, renowned throughout Europe. Both nations, to coin a word in the German fashion, are corn-tramplers. Nevertheless, the Japanese are clever with their fingers, if not with their minds ; but they are austere and ascetic ; as individuals, kind, but tyrannical the moment they put on a uniform, state-owned after an early age, afraid of ideas ; while their greatest aim and happiness consists in being killed for their country and getting everybody else (some of whom are not so keen on it)

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killed too. . . . Yet, it must be confessed that, in times past, no nation has produced finer works of art.

But though in so many traits the Chinese resemble the French, on the other hand, as yet they lack their patriotism, which leaders as diverse as Joan of Arc, Louis XIV and Napoleon have cast into an imperishable mould. . . . No doubt, if the Japanese are in Peking, the people of Peking will be nice to them ; because, as I have said, they want to proceed with their own lives and their own business and, in the course of these, to receive as little molestation as possible. In the long run, the historic result of invading China will repeat itself. . . . One day, when I was in London, at the beginning of the Chinese-Japanese war, I asked a Chinese friend of mine, a professor, who was having tea with me, " Dr. Sung, what do you think will happen in China ? " He replied, " Mr. Sitwell, I think and hope that our troops will win in battle ; or perhaps—for it is a large country—through the use of guerrilla tactics. But, if they do not win, then the Japanese will win. At present there are seventy million Japanese and four hundred million Chinese : so, after their victory, there will, instead, be four hundred and seventy million Japanese, of whom four hundred million will be Chinese. . . . You see ? "

Even should Japan temporarily succeed, she will never be able to transform the Chinese character or outlook. Nor, I apprehend, will national misfortune, even if overwhelming, ever rid the Chinese uneducated classes of the contempt they entertain for foreigners and, not least, for the Japanese. It is an innate sentiment, persisting from the most remote times, when the word *China* meant the Middle Kingdom ; the centre of the world. . . . Even so late as the reign of George III, the Emperor Chia Ch'ing remained convinced that England was a vassal state on the fringe of his Empire. Indeed, I think that one of the saddest and most singular

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events in history occurred in 1840 when China, still sure of her invincibility, first collided with a great modern industrial power at Hong Kong and found, to the amazement of the Emperor and his Mandarins, that she was hopelessly surpassed in might by a barbarian state: but nothing would ever persuade the Chinese people of it. They could, and would, never place belief in such a state of affairs. The supremacy of Chinese life and of Chinese ways of thinking is a certainty of which the Chinese mind never has been—and, I think, never will be—disabused. The contempt they cherish for “lesser breeds without the Law” is at root a moral one. As readers of the *Satyricon* of Petronius, for example, are aware, no moral condemnation can exceed in strength and virtue that entertained—I had almost written, enjoyed—by the addicts of one vice for those addicted to another.

Thus we are shocked by what seems to us, often, the cruelty of the Chinese, their insensitiveness to the physical pain of others, their laughter at it. Certainly that laughter—though chiefly among the uneducated classes—exists. I remember, for instance, going one day to a shop in Jade Street, kept by a most dignified old jeweller, always arrayed in imposing robes, and with a beautifully trimmed beard. I had on several occasions bought things of him, so that we were on friendly terms. But, upon this particular day, in going out I bumped my head rather badly against the low lintel of the door, and, turning round suddenly, when the proprietor imagined I was out of sight, observed him doubled up with laughter, level with the counter, so great were the spasms. . . . Similarly, one morning I asked Chang to pour some hot water into a glass I was holding: in so doing, he poured a few drops, almost boiling, by mistake on to my hand, and laughed so much at my consequent moment of agony—while repeating over and over again the words, “Velly, velly solly”—that I had to relieve

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him of the kettle in case, in a paroxysm, he should spill the rest of it. . . . Yet I believe the laughter that pain arouses after this fashion in the Chinese to be merely an instinctive reaction. I do not think they find it really *funny*: but they laugh, just as we might give an exclamation.

But we are not more horrified at such traits than are they by certain of ours: our insensitiveness to, and neglect of, our ancestors, our lack of respect for the old. Our vices seem particularly despicable to them when matched against their own. . . . Opium-smoking was at that time against the law (indeed, until the arrival of the Japanese, it had really decreased). It would be idle, however, to pretend that none existed. But even those Chinese who never indulged in it and who altogether condemned the practice, were wont to compare it favourably with the manner in which Europeans drank whisky and cocktails. The habit of opium, they would maintain in argument, if smoked in moderation, a few times a week—and especially on Sunday afternoons, two or three pipes, in the manner of so many of the legion of Peking antique-dealers—keeps a man free in the winter of those dreadful “coolie colds” (for which the city is justifiably famous), and in the summer, from dysentery. But to drink, like the Europeans do, day in and day out: *that* is dreadful! . . . Of course Chinese gentlemen sometimes get a *little* drunk on Chinese wine (but then Chinese wine is so healthy, one drinks it only to keep well). A little too strong, sometimes, that is all; it nevertheless possesses properties that make Chinese drunkenness different, a thing of poetry and good fellowship. But women allowing themselves to drink it! And cocktails! Yet in a way this scandalised contempt has in it a quality of tolerance.

Let me quote Chang twice again, in an attempt to convey this outlook. . . . First, before proceeding further, it must be taken into account that their profession



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occasionally obliges Chinese servants in the employment of Europeans to see life in its most unpleasant aspects ; they are under the orders of people who often fail to treat them with consideration, regarding them—and without any desire to make a secret of it—as members of an inferior and subject race, “ a set of Chinks.” Moreover, at the best, European manners in distant parts of the world always tend, too, to sink to colonial standards : I mean, they are manners of the heart, the most touching of all, but without elegance ; whereas the Chinese of every class prize above all subtle and elaborate courtesy, which, cultivated for centuries, has even evolved an entire rhetoric of its own. I doubt if they have much respect for the European and American kindness and plain-speaking with which, equally, they often come in contact. They are disillusioned.

Yes, sometimes it is more disillusionment than contempt. . . . Thus one day a note arrived from Mrs. Lulling-Cheetham, a well-known, long-established resident in Peking. It ran, “ Dear Mr. Sitwell, I have just been able to obtain, from impoverished members of an old Manchu family with whom I was brought up, some wonderful specimens of old silk. And since I think that you, with all your knowledge and taste, may be interested, I send them round to you by a servant, who unfortunately speaks no English : but their prices are clearly marked on each roll of material, ranging from 120 to 150 dollars a yard : very reasonable, I think you will admit, when one considers how rare they are, how hard to come by. All of them have the Emperor Ch’ien Lung’s cypher worked in at the corners and sides. I send them to *you first*, so that you may have your choice. Please choose the ones you want, and send the others back to me by hand, as they are precious. . . . Indeed, if it were not to oblige old playmates fallen on bad times, I would not care to have them in my charge. . . . They are too valuable. . . . And one never knows whom one

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can trust nowadays, does one? . . . But you'll think me cynical, I fear. Yours very sincerely, Lily Lulling-Cheetham."

The silks were pretty enough : but Chang hovered in an airy way in the background, and presently, knowing that his confrere spoke no English, kicked one roll with his foot, so as to expose the price, and said to me in an off-hand manner, as though talking about the weather, "Dealer who supplies those silks to Mrs. Lulling-Cheetham, friend of mine : makes them himself in Nanking, and sell here for five dollars and a half a yard each ! No good."

But, also, I can give an instance of the contempt, tolerant contempt. . . . I was alone at dinner one night, when, as Chang filled my glass, he said suddenly :—

"Major Champing-Chudbury, late master, him very angry with Chang one night."

"Really . . . I'm sorry to hear it. I hope you had given him no cause for complaint? "

"Angry because not like me carry Mrs. Champing-Chudbury upstairs."

"Well, why did you do it, then? "

"Because she could not walk."

"Poor creature ! " I said, " a cripple. . . . But isn't that *like* people? He ought to have been *pleased* and *grateful* to you for helping her, and instead he was angry ! . . . Though actually, I believe, he was right in a way—because, if they can use their legs at all, it's supposed to be better to make them *try* to walk. . . . Otherwise the muscles atrophy."

"Mrs. Champing-Chudbury, she try walk, all right : but no good. Tellible fall ! Hear it all over house. House shake like quacker.\* Fall velly heavy and hurt herself bad." (At this point, Chang laughed so uproariously that he had to stop talking. . . . As soon as I could make myself heard, I replied.)

\* Earthquake.

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"How dreadful, *poor* woman!"

"And then she fall again, upstairs, as soon as I put her down. . . . Major Champing-Chudbury, him furious this time, he shout and he yell."

"But how unfeeling of him to be angry, just because she was ill."

"And it take a lot—oh, you should see, a great big lot—to make her ill too. Most of that day, she walk as if the sea were crawly."

"How very unkind of her husband to behave like that when she'd been ill all day. Very unkind, I call it."

"No, Major very kind man. Very patient, but no like empty bottles. Seventy-two empty bottles in cupboard downstairs, besides what Major find in bedroom. And Mrs. singing all the time like the prayer for Universal Peace in the Lama Temple. . . . Master not seen Lama Temple? There's a rumour there is fair there to-morrow. Perhaps Master and Chang go in motor?"

"There's a rumour" was the proper indirect way of announcing something of which you were certain, and had long been forewarned. . . . And so, once more, I accepted his suggestion. . . . It proved an experience. This Temple is one of the largest in Peking. The Emperor K'ang Hsi first saw the light in the ancestral palace which formerly occupied its site, but, because no palace wherein, in the Chinese phrase, "a Dragon was born," can ever again be the dwelling-place of mortals, according to custom he converted it into a temple. Moreover, being interested in Tibetan Lamaism, he dedicated it to that creed, and placed it under special Imperial patronage. For that reason, its numerous buildings are all roofed, after the same manner as the Forbidden City, with yellow or orange tiles.

The next day, when the motor drew up at the gates of the temple, the cries and music of the Devil-Dancers, who perform, only at this fair, once a year, could be

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heard right across the three intervening courts, all of vast extent. The crowd of pleasure-seekers—for such, rather than devout, their demeanour showed them to be—behaved as though it were a Rugby-football scrum ; but one on an immensely enlarged and, from the point of view of the possibility of violence and inflicting injury, improved scale. Pent up for a while, just as we entered, it broke like a flood through the heavily guarded gates. Police with batons and thonged whips and long poles laid about them, but got as good as they gave. They were swept through into the second courtyard, in spite of their weapons and the vigorous use to which they put them. Here fighting, all against all, began in earnest : there was more room, and, at the same time, more people to join in. The struggle centred round the tall, square black marble monument which stands in the middle (a tablet on each face gives the history of Tibetan Lamaism in four languages, Chinese on the north, Manchu on the south, Tibetan on the west, Mongolian on the east). Chang edged his way round the outside of this swearing, swaying, screaming, banging multitude, making himself “look small,” and by some means or other contrived to sidle into the inner court, taking me with him, without either of us incurring a scratch.

Here, surrounded by a mob of excited Chinese spectators, the Devil-Dancers, in carved and painted masks and rich, fantastic dresses, were whirling round and indulging in various significant antics to the sound of gongs, drums, trumpets and stringed instruments. The lamas, however, who were not disguised after this fashion, but, clad in their ordinary robes, instead gazed intently at their brothers, appeared scarcely less interesting and unusual. Those garbed in yellow came from Mongolia, those in murrey from Tibet, and their bearing, the expression of their faces, were both remote and uncouth, yet sly and challenging. Their manifest poverty had

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about it, too, for China, an unusual ferocity. In fact, their presence here seemed hardly less alien than that of their five terrible gods in one of the halls behind them ; the Five Defenders of the Law, as they are called, who include among their number the adored goddess of the Red Sect of Lamaism, with her black, gory face and necklace of human skulls, Kali, to whom the Thugs made their sacrifices, and Yama, the God of Death. . . . Besides these monks, others—for the monastery contains a whole army of them—were swarming in the Hall of the Wheel of the Law. Some were merely watching, or only joining in to the extent of uttering short, sharp yells at regular, rhythmic intervals, while those actually taking part squatted cross-legged on the floor, turning prayer-wheels and howling—so they gave out—for Universal Peace. . . . I hope it *was* for that purpose, because I subscribed a sum toward it. But I nearly withheld my pence, for, judging purely from the sound, I had my doubts concerning it at the time. And the course of events in the subsequent few years seems to have borne them out.

The whole scene, the temple, the monument, the lamas, the dances, formed a good instance of the cosmopolitanism of Peking. Like all citizens of Peking, Chang himself was cosmopolitan by tradition : but, though tolerant of foreigners, and curious concerning their ways, in his heart only the Chinese and their customs abided. Within these precincts to-day, he enjoyed, as did all his fellow-countrymen who composed the audience, the noise, the shouts, the music, the spectacle, the sense of occasion. . . . But I doubt if he really approved. Mongolians and Tibetans, though former vassals, were outlandish : to them he offered the same contemptuous tolerance, combined with curiosity, that he bestowed as much upon myself as upon his former employers, the Champing-Chudburys. For all that the rites were celebrated in Peking, this fair

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to him remained a performance given for foreign devils by foreign devils.

The air of Peking was full of this combined contempt, tolerance and curiosity ; an atmosphere that puzzled me, for I was sure I had known something like it before. . . . But where had it been, that great city, with an utter lack of faith in anything, yet full of superstition, abounding in temples, empty, except at the annual fairs, full of decaying works of art and of crowded streets and restaurants and theatres and shows of every kind, the centre of an empire gone to seed ? Could it have been Vienna that offered the parallel ? . . . No, not like this, a different disintegration altogether. . . . I sought to recapture its identity, but for a long time it perplexed and evaded me.

SIR OSBERT SITWELL, *Escape With Me!* (1939)

## NAZARETH

AT last we were strong enough to leave for Nazareth. We stayed in an inn there. As we were the only guests we were well cared for.

I was truly enchanted by this upland village. Though there are several modern religious buildings too conspicuous on the hills, yet the inherent perfection of the place remains. There is a grace about Nazareth not easy to be matched. Its white-pink walls give it a shell-like quality, and the houses cluster about the hillsides like the mud nests of swallows. It was here that Jesus had been brought up. I thought of this native, of this Jew, whose name, by a swerve in the natural sequence of cause and effect, has so bewitched our hearts. When once we have rid our minds of all Church teaching, how deeply we can be moved by the few authentic utterances of this prophet, so sensitive, so stamped with immortal simplicity ! Churchmen can hold up their

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hands in horror at free speech and heretical thoughts, and yet it is they who have betrayed him ; it is they who have caught his wilful sprite and shut it up in the churches like a linnet. How swift was the flash of this man's intelligence, how reckless of all conventional restraint ! He showed clearly that underneath the pushing, ugly, strapping world there was a quality as inexplicable, as rueful, as the love of a zebra for its dead mate. Say what they will, he was not of their fellowship. He suspected ritual and religious ceremonies.

We went up into the village on the first night of our arrival. We passed close by the synagogue where Jesus had preached on that morning when his neighbours had sought to kill him. It was within this circle of loose stones that he had learned his *a-b-c's*. It was perhaps here that intimations of his heroic purpose had first come to him when with his child eyes veiled in a day-dream he had looked through the open door toward the hill of Our Lady's Fright, heedless of the voice of the good *khazzan* droning on.

There were already lights in the bazaars. The narrow streets were crowded. We passed carpenter shops, cobbler shops, smith shops. Hidden in the foundations of those dark houses were without doubt thousands of stones which had been worked into shape before the birth of Christ. There must be stones there that he himself had lifted, could we but come to a knowledge of dumb matter's forgotten secrets, for in his age a carpenter's trade was often equivalent to that of a builder.

We walked back above the road, high up on the slope of the hill. The stone-worn path led us through a burial-place. If we stepped from it we stumbled against forlorn dusty graves. We came into a narrow lane with sandy boulders projecting from its sides. Down this lane in the dusk of the evening an old lean cow was ambling.

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She was evidently returning to her shed. She advanced slowly but with purpose, her hind quarters lowering themselves whenever the way was more than usually steep. After she had passed I saw her put her muzzle to the sandy dust as though smelling out the direction she wished to take. "The ox knoweth his owner, and the ass her master's crib."

These days we spent at Nazareth were perhaps the happiest of all. We were determined not to hurry away ; we wished to grow accustomed to the place, to grow familiar with its houses, its corner-stones, its back lanes. There was a moon most of the time. One night when it was in its first quarter we walked along the road past the threshing-floor and Mary's well to the hillside opposite. The air was mild, and we sat for a long while looking at the village, so wan and silent in its midnight beauty. Far up above us I could see the Pleiades, which my mother on winter nights, walking back from prayer-meetings, would often say looked like a trinket of priceless gems. Below them were the Hyades and the planet Jupiter, while beyond and beyond again was outstretched the fathomless infinitude of the heavens. How poised the village looked, how motionless ! Yet it had a terrene appearance also, as though it had for long ages been sheltered from the fearful conflagrations of the outer spaces and from the loneliness of the outer voids. Far away some dogs were barking, and I heard an ass bray. If Jesus is in very truth a God, the son of God, he must surely hold always in remembrance, nay, in actual vision, this upland circle. The curves and shadows I looked upon under the white light of the moonshine must even now be in his mind, tenderly acknowledged as existing in memory. For he could never have forgotten the nature of the planet of his sojourn, never have forgotten the nature of the earth's appeal, so intimate, so lovely and so strange. Who knows but through the music of the crystal spheres he



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catches the reiterated sound of the hooped waves breaking upon the world's sea-shores and the impartial crying of the white gulls, articulate of nature's unthinking confidence! I dream. It cannot be. His dust, the dust of Jesus Christ so pitiable and so proud, has long since been transformed into infinitesimal particles blown hither and thither amongst littered olive leaves. It has been moved aside by the feet of the obedient mules. It has given sustenance to the fair innocence of the grass of the land. Dead, dead, dead! Since that human body dropped after its last cry of despair there has been no reviving. Ruined and again ruined! Only this religion remains to save the memory of the man so passionate and so to be adored. How extraordinary that it should all have happened as it has happened! Like lost children in a wood, we will follow any light. We are intimidated by death, we are hungry for re-assurance, we demand that the secret nature of things should be solicitous for our welfare. Though they prosper for a time, all our fond credulities must one by one be abandoned. We have been deceived and we are deceived. We thrive on cozenage as nanny goats and quails on the poison of hellebore.

Passing down that road with no footfalls sounding but our own, with the hooting of an owl from a sprawling fig tree, with tiny crickets piping, and with the flickering shadows of bats on the white dust, I would gladly have had Christianity to be true.

Yesterday I received a letter from an old servant. Her husband, a miner in South Wales, has been out of work for nearly a year and they have been living in inconceivable poverty. "I hope this year will be better," she wrote, "for you never did see such poverty what be about in these parts. We must put our trust in God, as your old father used to tell us in pulpit on Sundays." Yet actually there is none to save, no divine power capable of sudden intervention. Every hour,

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every day, simple people are rudely trodden down and innocence is betrayed and *nothing said*. In old times I used often to talk with Betsy Cooper, the daughter of Nancy Cooper, the Odcombe witch. It was her custom to come to the back door for a cup of cocoa after picking up sticks in the park. She was dressed in fold upon fold of tattered rags, was lousy, and was ignorant of everything but her joy at hearing the cuckoo in the spring, and yet I have seen the tears pour down her wrinkled cheeks ingrained with dirt, for no better reason than that the Jews had crucified Jesus. "Oh, dearie I—look-see! how terrible bad they did serve he!" And I would turn away from the old woman and go along the kitchen-garden path with the yellow April sunshine upon the yellow forsythia and upon the yellow trumpets of the daffodils.

That midnight, at any rate, my soul was nurtured in reality, for in spite of the treason of the moon I marked clearly with my mortal eyes the round shadows cast by the hands of the cactuses held up against the white roadside wall, the very prickles growing out of them visibly defined, an insistent shadow of a shadow marked down on a crumbling segment of an unhusbanded universe.

LLEWELYN POWYS, *A Pagan's Pilgrimage* (1931)

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THE dentist swung his drill towards me. Its counter-weight ball grew larger and larger, like a football, like a pumpkin, like a world. He began to drill and the vibration went right through my head and became a ringing—the ringing of an alarm clock. I put out a hand and stopped its clamour and then remembered where I was. I leapt out of bed and wiped the moisture from the window. It was snowing. Against the jagged black

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mountains, barred with streaks of white, the flakes whirled and danced and eddied. The black buildings and chimneys of the whaling station across the harbour were almost obscured by them but there, on the mainmast of the old coaling hulk, fluttered, beyond all possibility of doubt, the tattered red flag. This was an arrangement we had with the old foreman at the station, who stumped about the whaling slipway on his bowed legs and tugged at odd lumps of flesh with a whale hook. When there were whales waiting at the slipway to be cut up he hoisted the flag so that we, Wheeler and I, peering through the windows of the Marine Biological Station a quarter of a mile away across the bay at four-thirty in the morning, should know that we must turn out. I put on thick trousers, an equally thick shirt and two jerseys. The Marine Biological Station was a long, low, one-storeyed building facing a wide bay on the other side of which the desolate mountains climbed steadily upwards to Mount Paget, the highest in the island, nearly ten thousand feet high. The house consisted of a long L-shaped passage. On one side of one leg of the L was the laboratory looking over the bay. On the other the living quarters, sitting-room, dining-room and bedrooms. The kitchen and other bedrooms lay off the other leg of the L. In the dining-room Wheeler was sitting, clad also in thick jersey and trousers, brooding at half-past four in the morning over a cup of cocoa. There was a cup for me and I drank it while King George, in his deal frame, gazed down upon us in full admiral's uniform. Above him on the deal frame was a little gilt crown on a little gilt cushion to show that it was indeed a royal portrait. On this ornament I fastened my eyes nearly every morning for two southern summers. When the cocoa had been gulped down we rose, and, still in complete liver-bound silence, for it was only a quarter-past five even now, went into the rough laboratory, adjoining the main laboratory, to put

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on our whaling clothes. The rough laboratory stank, for here, on a lead-covered table, portions of the extracted viscera of whales were examined, and here our whaling overalls hung. At this hour of the morning the rough laboratory seemed to stink more than usual. We put on our whaling overalls, stiff with dried blood, high rubber thigh-boots with long spikes in the soles, and a leather belt carrying a sheath knife. An old cap completed this attractive outfit. I was pleased with myself in it. I felt that it made me look tough, for there is nothing better, if you are not tough in the least, than to look it. Even if I did not look it I knew perfectly well that at the end of the day I smelt it, for the smell of whale is pungent and extraordinarily clinging. A whaly B.O. was inseparable from the work which Wheeler and I did. We went across the harbour to the whaling station in an open motor-boat with an engine housed amidships in an inadequate box. Often snow got into the box and water into the carburettor. You started this contraption by swinging a heavy handle. Sometimes it gave only a few answering sighs and subsided into silence. When this happened you kept at it until you had nearly burst a blood-vessel and then, finally, red in the face, sweating in spite of the cold and with a curious spiritual feeling in the midriff, you decided to row over in the dinghy which hung on davits from the jetty. In the middle of letting the dinghy into the water a long dreary call came across the water from the whaling station—the hooter calling the men to work. You could see in the distance the tall plume of steam the hooter sent up. When this happened we knew that the first whale would be drawn up before we got there. We made it a principle never to miss any whale brought into that whaling station if we could possibly help it, so we rowed in the dinghy like men possessed. But this morning there was no water in the carburettor and, after one or two swings, the engine sputtered and we

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were off, cutting our way smartly through the slushy film on the water, Wheeler at the tiller, his head down to keep the snow out of his eyes.

As you approached the whaling station from across the harbour the buildings seemed to open out and arrange themselves around a large square several acres in extent, the boarded surface of which sloped into the sea. This was where the whales were flensed, or stripped, and dismembered. The Norwegians called it the "plan" or level place. Along two sides of it were the buildings which housed the boilers in which the dismembered fragments of the whales were boiled down to give the clear, white whale oil. A shed containing the blubber boilers stood on one side and another containing the boilers for the masses of flesh, the "meat," stood on the other. Four bucket conveyers sloped up to the top storey of this shed and shot their masses of blood and flesh and guts into the tops of the boilers. At the back of the "plan" was a high raised platform with a long inclined slipway leading up to it. Here were the steam saws which cut up the skull and backbone and underneath the high platform were the boilers into whose gaping mouths the sections of bone, neatly sawn up, were tipped.

Where the "plan" sloped into the oily scum-covered water there floated four whale carcasses and a motor-boat was chugging slowly up with a fifth, towing it tail first. They looked like immense balloons floating in the water and on their ribbed surfaces, the upturned bellies and throats, birds perched and pecked and fought, screaming with outstretched wings. All the surface of the water around the whaling station was covered with this chattering shrieking bird life, living on the garbage that floated to them from the "plan." Black-backed gulls swooped and bickered over the gory refuse on the "plan" itself and stood in rows upon the roofs of the sheds crying shrilly.

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Behind the "plan," under the raised platform where the bones were cut up, was a lean-to shed. It was a kind of armoury containing rows and rows of long-handled knives with curved blades. These were the knives which were used to cut the whale carcasses into pieces. The handle of each was some four feet long and the broad blade perhaps three inches across. This armoury was presided over by an old man with only one eye who kept the knives continually sharp with a grindstone. Wheeler and I and our assistant had each one of these knives allotted to us by this presiding genius under orders from the manager. Every morning we went to his shed and were given our knives, each cut with a "D" for *Discovery* on the handle, newly sharpened on the grindstone. But sooner or later the morning would arrive when we noticed that our knives were not so newly sharpened. And then a few mornings after that it was obvious that they had not been sharpened at all. Then the old man would say that the sharpening of so many knives was terribly hard work and that he was getting old and hardly knew how he could go on sometimes because of the extraordinary and unaccountable dry feeling in the throat that constantly overcame him. Hadn't we any remedy over there—pointing across the harbour—for the dry feeling in the throat of an old man? So next morning, carefully concealed under our overalls, we would bring a small bottle of yellow fluid, the only really satisfactory remedy for the dryness in an old man's throat, manufactured in Scotland. And the following morning our knives were bright and keen as the sword of Saladin.

Now the hooter shrieked above the roof of one of the sheds and from their living quarters behind the "plan" three men appeared. They carried long-handled knives and stropped them with hones which they wore in their belts and on which they spat with unerring aim, holding them at arm's length to do so and never missing.

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They were dressed like ourselves in old overalls, stiff with dried blood, and high spiked sea-boots. They were Hansen, Fritz and Hartvig, the "flensers," skilled men whose sole job it was to peel the blubber off the whales in three long strips. They always appeared first upon the "plan" because, until the blubber had been removed, there was nothing for anyone else to do.

Hansen and Fritz were inseparables, always together. They lived next door to one another in Sandefjord and had been in the employ of the whaling station together for many years. They came out together in the same cabin in the transport ship and went home together in the same cabin. They shared the same cabin in their barracks on the whaling station. They laughed together and cursed together and one would not work unless the other was in the same shift and on the same job. I imagine they will die together. How they met I do not know. Hansen was a sailor, had a mate's ticket and had sailed in many British ships. He therefore spoke English well and called himself "just an old sailor." For a tot of whisky he would do anything and once worked hard for three days when there were no whales and he had time to spare, making a fender of plaited ropes to go round the counter of our motor-boat for this apparently insignificant reward. He had a face like a withered apple and a yellow walrus moustache, and his hands had the shortest fingers I have ever seen. Fritz, boon companion of Hansen, was an immensely tall and powerful man with a face rather like a family solicitor and a head which, when he removed his old cap, surprisingly revealed itself as bald as a pea. He spoke no English at all and when at work swore volubly in Norwegian. In negotiations with us for tots of whisky he played second fiddle to Hansen and usually just stood grinning and nodding. Hartvig, the third flenser, was a little out of it with these two. He spoke no English and only once a year came round to the

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Marine Biological Station to "drink our healths," which he did modestly, soberly and respectably, going away when it became evident that the time for going away had arrived. In this he differed from Hansen and Fritz, who were never able to perceive the time for going away, no matter how plainly we indicated it. I remember Hartvig chiefly because he played a fast and vicious game of football, wearing very short shorts and sock suspenders on his white muscular legs. On one of the few occasions when I played football, ingloriously, against the Norwegians Hartvig kicked me violently on the shins with one of those suspended white legs.

The whales were drawn up on the "plan" by steel hawsers and steam winches. A loop of hawser was passed over the tail as the carcass lay in the water and, with the first tautening of the long wire, the great mass heaved itself out of the water. It jerked slowly and heavily up the slope until its head was well clear of the water and the tail lay half-way up the "plan" near the blubber shed. During these cumbersome voyages up the slope one of the flippers sometimes got caught on a post of an elevated tip-truck railway which carried coal across the "plan." Then you stood back for presently the flipper released itself with a resounding smack upon the wooden boards of the "plan." If you got in its way it would kill you.

Behold Leviathan! The largest of the creatures of the earth, the largest that has ever lived. Sometimes he is a hundred feet long and perhaps fifteen feet high—the size, maybe, of a three-coach electric train. He lies dead and inert now upon his side, one flipper sticking up in the air, but his shape, you can see, is wonderfully streamlined, bluntly pointed in front and tapering to the tail fins behind. These horizontal tail fins give him his motive force. He is a whale-bone whale and his mouth is filled with horny whalebone plates which hang down from the upper jaw—the baleen. His head is huge,



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flat and triangular and its geography is the oddest of any head God ever created. It consists chiefly of an enormous mouth stretched perpetually in a grin. The mouth is filled with the whalebone plates which hang from the upper jaw and, with their fringed inner edges, make a cavern roofed by tangled hairs. The tongue lies like a deflated balloon upon the floor of this cavern in which two men could stand upright easily. In the Antarctic these whalebone whales feed upon small shrimp-like animals which the Norwegians call "krill." These swarm in millions in the colder Antarctic seas and along the edges of the pack-ice and here the Blue whale, or Common Rorqual, and his cousin the Fin whale, or Finback, spend the southern summer browsing. The whale swims through the dense drifting swarms of "krill" with his gigantic mouth open, engulfing millions. Then, rolling over partly on his side, he closes his mouth and inflates his balloon-like tongue within it so that the sea-water streams out between the horny plates. The "krill" gets entangled among the matted hairs of the inner edges of the plates and is drawn backwards by the tongue into a throat so small that you could scarcely get your arm into it. Right at the corner of the vast grinning mouth is an eye, an utterly inadequate eye one would think, for, in relation to the size of the beast, it is of minute size. As the whale lies on the "plan" dead the eye, in death, wears a roguish, knowing expression. On top of the flat head are two slits, the blow-holes or nostrils, and with them the whale breathes, coming to the surface to do so, for, in spite of his fish-like shape, the whale is a mammal and breathes air.

Now the flensers got busy on the mountain that had once been the Leviathan, plunging and snorting in the open ocean. Fritz, with his long-handled curved knife, made a cut up the side of the body, running along the top of the mountain with his spiked boots until he was

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fifteen feet above Hansen, who was making a similar cut along the creature's back, walking along the ground to do so. The cut that Fritz made and the cut that Hansen made joined upon the snout but Hansen got there after Fritz because he met with an obstruction. It was the bent harpoon, sticking out of the gaping, bloody wound, in which the torn flesh was blackened by the explosion of the charge inside the muscles of the back. Hansen had to cut skilfully round this. The skin of the whale is firm and smooth and shiny and, since this was a Blue whale, or Common Rorqual, it was slate blue in colour. As the flensing knife passed through it, it parted crisply and underneath there showed a layer of hard white blubber several inches thick. This insulated the animal from the ice-cold world in which he lived, since, being a mammal, he was a warm-blooded beast and not cold-blooded like a fish. Then the strip of blubber isolated by Fritz's cut and Hansen's cut was peeled off backwards from the beast from the head to the tail by a steel hawser. Meanwhile Hartvig had made another cut at ground level along the middle line of the grooved stomach and throat on the opposite side to Hansen. His cut ended at the tip of the lower jaw and isolated, with the cut that Fritz had made, a second strip of blubber along the underside of the beast, and this too was pulled off by a steel hawser. The two strips of blubber arched upwards and backwards as the hawsers pulled them off with a rending crackling noise while the flensers helped them by cutting under them with their knives. Soon two long strips of white blubber had been pulled off and lay upon the "plan," their inner surfaces upwards. The "plan" was now swarming with men, almost all of whom carried long knives. They came trooping out of their barracks while the flensers were busy stripping off the blubber. Among them were the blubber cutters whose business it was to cut up the long strips of blubber

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into square blocks like cheese and feed them to the hopper. The hopper was a circular knife which revolved at a terrific speed, and with a maddening racket, past an opening in the wall of the blubber shed. The blubber cutters dragged their square cheeses to the aperture and the knife, whirling furiously inside, pulled them in and cut them into slivers which were shot into the boilers within the shed. There were six blubber cutters—two Norwegians and four Argentines of Polish extraction, who jabbered to one another in a Spanish of sorts while they worked. They were round, fat, jolly little men and laughed continually. Particularly they roared with laughter at Wheeler and me who were, of course, a standing joke on the "plan." Frequently, when we did anything which seemed to them particularly mockworthy, they doubled up with laughter and poked each other with the handles of their flensing knives.

But Wheeler and I got used to being a standing joke on the "plan." In all our movements we had to be exceedingly careful since the whole place became, as the morning went on, a maze of criss-cross wires flicking and tightening, whirling lumps of flesh, intestines, skulls, and backbones from one end to the other. The din of the rattling and hissing steam winches and the machine-gun rat-tat-tat of the blubber hopper were deafening. Blood and muck flowed in rivulets and cascades, and the sea around the "plan" became bright crimson. At first I fell constantly upon my backside to the delight of all. Occasionally I have come near ruination by the upward flick of a wire just as I was stepping across it. Sometimes I have stepped upon a slippery lump of flesh or a slithery cushion of tongue tissue and gone sprawling upon my face. They loved it. Sometimes I have suspected them of deliberately trying to trip me, starting to heave on a winch at the exact moment I was stepping over a wire. And sometimes a whale in an advanced

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state of decomposition would come up on the "plan," sizzling with putrefaction. Several times one of us had been standing near one of these when it had suddenly exploded, showering greasy, stinking, rotten flesh over us and into our faces. That caused particular delight. But let it be said that they laughed at each other's misfortunes just as much and every bit as cruelly. Once I saw one of the men miss his footing on the long slope leading up to the raised bone platform. He slid down it and along half the length of the "plan" on his bottom, picking himself up at the end of it considerably shaken. The whole work of the "plan" was disorganised. About a hundred and fifty men ceased work for five minutes to roar with unsympathetic laughter. Others crowded to the windows of the boiler sheds and came running out of the furnace room to see what it was all about. Even the old man who ground the knives came hobbling out of his hole. The old foreman of the "plan" came stumping up with his steel whale hook in his hand, beaming with pleasure. "There he went. There he went," he said. "Yessir. Down he went. Poor man! Poor man!" And he stumped off chuckling.

The first thing that Wheeler and I did to every whale was to measure the length of it from the snout to the tail and take various other measurements. The purpose of this was to find out, from the examination of a great number, whether any change in bodily proportions takes place with growth and what variations take place in the size of the whales brought into the station from month to month and year to year. The management of the whaling station also required the foreman to note down the length, sex and species of every whale for their own records. The foreman took his lengths from us but it was a long time before he would do so. For months he stuck to his four-metre-long measuring stick as against our hundred-metre-long tape. After we had made our careful measurement, being sure that the tape

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was straight and that one end was opposite the snout while the other end was opposite the notch between the tail fins, he would advance with his stick and begin to space off the whale along its surface from the snout backwards. Now a whale's body is not flat-sided but cigar-shaped and frequently the old foreman was not even very particular to hold his stick horizontal, so it is hardly surprising that the length, as obtained with his measuring rod, was widely different from the length which we obtained with our tape. "I makes it twenty-seven metres. Yessir. Well, well. You wouldna think it to look at it." And then, peering suddenly at the notebook I carried, and sucking the end of a stub of pencil, "What d'ye make it?"

"Twenty-three point seven eight metres."

"*Fand!* Well, let's measure it out again."

And he would begin again with his measuring stick and make it this time twenty-six metres. Then he would stand and look at the whale with his head on one side. "Well," he would say. "Let's call it twenty-five and a half." So, trusting in the judgment of his eye and disbelieving all sticks, tapes or mechanical contrivances whatever, he would moisten his pencil and write twenty-five and a half. But after a time he came to the conclusion that it was less trouble to accept our measurement and the measuring stick was put away.

After the two strips of blubber had been peeled off, the whale was turned ponderously over with block and tackle and the third strip, on which the carcass had been lying, was removed. Then the lower jaw came off and was whirled away to the bone platform. Now Hansen and Fritz and Hartvig had finished with that whale and, stripped naked of its blubber, it was pulled sideways across the "plan" and given over to the "lemmers," whose job it was to cut it into pieces from the bone platform and for the conveyers which tipped the meat and guts into the meat boilers. There were

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two "lemmers," enormous men who swore violently at their work in English because there are no words expressive enough in Norwegian. "*Fand*," meaning "devil," is about the strongest, and the to devil all Norwegian expletives whatsoever seem to be an invitation—usually to perform some obscene act upon the person of the swearer or the sworn at. So the "lemmers," perhaps sensing the inadequacy in this respect of their own language, swore in English and frequently said "Damn," which seemed to them, mild though it might appear to us, somehow more soul-satisfying than "Devil." The "lemmers" decapitated the whale first. Then they began to open its midriff and this was where Wheeler and I and our assistant did our stuff. Two of us advanced upon the carcass, flensing knives, as it were, at the "ready." We made a longitudinal cut in the belly wall in continuance of that made by the "lemmers" further forward and another vertical one behind in the pubic region. These cuts are not very easy to make for there is a considerable thickness of meat to cut through on the belly wall. Often the handle of the knife must be held horizontally at the level of the face to make the cut. Now when the whale was killed he was filled with air to make him float. He has also been decomposing gently since then, so that directly the body cavity is opened there is an explosive outrush of gas. The gas stinks. When these cuts have been made the flap of belly wall falls down and out come the vast innards of the beast. A stomach like a balloon, round and hard and inflated if full; soft, flaccid and voluminous if empty—a stomach large enough to hold a man crouching. Intestines the size of motor-tyres, pale pink in colour. Sometimes there was a foetus in the uterus and triumphantly we pulled out an almost perfect little miniature whale six inches, a foot, two feet, ten feet or nearly twenty feet long. At twenty feet it was near birth and more than three people could pull out. Then,

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sometimes, the Norwegians would laugh and crowd round to help us drag the monstrous child away, digging their whale hooks into its soft, smooth sides.

This performance of opening the whale and slitting open the stomach or intestines never failed to delight the Norwegians, who loved to see us covered in yellow slime from head to foot. We slit open the stomach to look at its contents. If it was full the half-digested remains of the "krill" would come pouring out like corn. Or, if it was empty, gallons of water would come cascading out and run in rivulets down the "plan" into the sea. We would slit the intestines to look for parasites. We pulled out the ovaries, diving and plunging for them among the rubbery pale-pink intestines, in order to take them back to the laboratory for a count of the luteal bodies. All this had to be done rapidly while the carcass was being pulled steadily to pieces by the "lemmers." When we got to know them better they would laugh and wait for us, but at first they seemed to like to see us thwarted of an ovary, or balked of a chance to examine the stomach, and would whisk things away and into a conveyer from under our noses.

Meanwhile Hansen, Fritz and Hartvig were stripping the blubber from another whale—this time a Finback, black above and white beneath, instead of slaty blue all over like the Blue whale. There is a curious asymmetry about the colouring of a Finback. His lower jaw is black on the left side and white on the right, while the whalebone plates in his mouth are all creamy white except those in the rear on the right side. These are black. No one knows why this is but it may be that he turns on his side when feeding so as to have the dark left side of his head uppermost and the pale right side downwards. So, leaving our eviscerated mass of flesh, we had to dash back again to the new whale to measure his length and the thickness of the blubber

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on the flank where Fritz had cut it. When the new whale had been stripped of its blubber and pulled over to the "lemmers" nothing remained of the first one except a heap of flesh and guts dissected away from the long backbone. A crowd of men with hooks and knives cut up this heap into smaller and smaller pieces and loaded them into the buckets. When each bucket was full of a revolting, bleeding mass they tapped on the runway of the conveyer and, at that signal, up it went and was received by men waiting for it aloft. Sometimes the bucket was overloaded and spilt its several tons of guts among the men below. More laughter. About two hours from the time the whale was pulled up on the "plan" nothing was left but the naked backbone which was hauled like a giant snake up to the steam saws on the bone platform. Soon nothing remained but a few separated vertebrae of the proud Leviathan which yesterday went snorting through the ocean. After a second or third whale had been dealt with the "plan" became a shambles, a gigantic disordered open-air slaughter-house. The din was indescribable and the smoke of the sacrifice went straight up into the cold morning air or was whirled away towards the black-and-white mountains.

Suddenly there was the shriek of a hooter. It was breakfast-time. Flensing knives were put down and the men streamed back shouting and laughing to their barracks. Then the gulls which had been waiting in ranks upon the roofs of all the sheds descended screaming in clouds upon the suddenly hushed and deserted charnel yard. They bickered and yelled and fought among themselves and, on their revolting diet, they became fat, sleek and immaculate in their black-and-white coats as no other gulls on earth.

F. D. OMMANEY, *South Latitude* (1938)



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### TO THE BARRIER

THE Antarctic Continent is about the size of Australia. It lies upon the base of the world lifeless, desolate, terrible, ringed by storms—*Terra Australis Incognita*, a perpetual challenge to the daring and integrity of mankind. On each side of it a huge bight has been scooped out as though the fingers that sculptured it out of rock and ice had pinched it almost into a figure of eight. One of these, the Weddell Sea, faces the Atlantic. The other, the Ross Sea, faces the Pacific. Into both these great embayments in the contour of the Continent there sweeps a westerly current which runs within each in a clockwise direction and, flowing out from each towards the north-east, carries pack-ice and icebergs far out into the open ocean. In the Weddell Sea the long peninsula of Graham Land forms an ice-trap against which the circular current piles up the pack-ice in an interlocked and jumbled heap, but in the Ross Sea there is no such ice-trap, for the mountainous coast of Victoria Land does not project far northward upon its western border. Thus there is no pressure-ice in the Ross Sea and the pack-ice that forms there is, for this reason, far less formidable than that in the Weddell Sea. It moves slowly with the current north-eastwards and out as a long stream across the entrance to the bight but south of it there is, throughout most of the summer, a great stretch of open water—an enclosed sea—hemmed in by pack-ice to the north and to the south bounded by the great Ross Barrier. In late summer this enclosing band of pack-ice disappears and the Ross Sea lies open right up to the barrier face.

The great Ross Barrier is a floating shelf of ice, four hundred miles long from one side to the other, and throughout its length about a hundred feet high. It is flat or gently undulating on top and beneath it are

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over three hundred fathoms of water. There are many such shelves of ice around the Antarctic Continent but the Ross Barrier is the largest yet discovered and the most astounding. To understand how these barriers are formed, imagine a house with a sloping roof upon which a winter's snow has accumulated as a thick mantle of compacted ice. As the mass accumulates it will begin to overhang at the eaves and presently, when a certain weight has been attained, a huge slab of it will slide down the roof and fall with a heavy thud upon the flower-beds below. But now imagine that the house stands up to its eaves in water. Then, as the mass on the roof accumulates, it will float out upon the water to form a shelf still joined to the roof but supported upon the water. And every now and then, when a certain breaking strain has been reached, slabs of it will break free and float away. The gentler the slope of the roof the larger the floating shelf will become and the longer it will be before a breaking strain is reached which will break off a piece of it. The larger, therefore, will be the pieces which will eventually break free. In many places the Antarctic Continent, under its continuous mantle of compacted ice many hundreds of feet thick, slopes gently down to the sea and there, in just this way, the ice-cap pushes outwards upon the water to form a barrier. A barrier is thus really a glacier front, for as more and more compacted ice forms inland the barrier creeps gradually outwards on to the sea. Breaking strains continually set free great slabs of it which float away as those immense tabular flat-topped icebergs which drift northwards until they reach warmer water where they begin to melt, change their centre of gravity in the process and, rolling over, assume bizarre and fantastic shapes. The outline of a barrier face is on this account never quite the same two years in succession. The Ross Barrier is the largest of all the known barriers. It is four hundred miles long from side to

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side. Four hundred miles due south from its seaward face it sweeps upward to the Polar plateau as the great Beardmore and Thorne glaciers, crevassed and sculptured into nightmare shapes and swept by blizzards that howl there through six months of continuous darkness. Scott, Amundsen and Shackleton ascended by this dreadful road towards the pole. As the glaciers move slowly, inexorably downwards so the Ross Barrier moves slowly forwards, but the action of wind and sea wears down its outer edge and breaking strains are continually unloosing huge portions of it. These float away into the Ross Sea, castles of ice a hundred and fifty feet high, streaked with shadow and girdled with foam. At the base of the Weddell Sea is a similar though smaller barrier, the Larsen Barrier, with a face about eighty feet high. The slabs of ice that break free from this are often of a size to shock the mind. In the *Discovery II* we steamed for three days round one which was forty miles long and twelve miles wide, and the old *Discovery* sheltered from a storm in the lee of one seventy miles in length. These gigantic ice islands, the size of an English county, sheer-sided and flat as a billiard table on top, drift northwards into the South Atlantic and up towards South Georgia where they break up into smaller fragments which, after years of wandering, disappear in the open ocean far to the north or come aground on the slope of some Antarctic island, there to await disintegration and decay.

In at least one place the sheer cliff of ice with which the Ross Barrier fronts the sea descends suddenly to sea-level and forms a huge open bay. Walls of ice bound the bay at the sides but at the back of it the barrier slopes gently down to the water and ships may tie up alongside as at a harbour jetty. The bay was discovered by Captain Scott and named by him the Bay of Whales. Seven miles south of it upon the barrier face Admiral Byrd built the little township of huts,

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living quarters, workshops and radio sheds which he called "Little America." It stands there still, deserted, sinking a little every year beneath the winter's thick accumulation of snow and year by year moving a little nearer to the sea as the barrier creeps forward. The huts are buried now and only spidery wireless masts, some poles and the mast of a wind pump with revolving blades mark the scene of this endeavour and matchless organisation. This was the goal for which Lincoln Ellsworth was aiming on his two-thousand-mile flight across the wastes of blinding whiteness. This was the home which, if he reached the end of it, awaited him.

When the *Discovery II* went south from Melbourne in January the pack-ice, we knew, would not yet have cleared away but would still form a drifting stream of floes some three or four hundred miles wide across the entrance to the Ross Sea. We must pass through this before we could reach the clear water to the south that washed the barrier face. Knowing the frailty of his steel ship, the *Old Man*, who for all that was only twenty-seven, was in doubt. His Scottish caution and memories of the Weddell Sea exactly four years ago recalled to him continually the thin steel of which his ship was built and the huge hold and engine room spaces which made her fragile as a tin can.

We met the pack-ice on a calm, still evening when the sky and sea were at peace in a harmony of pale colour. On the gentle swell battalions of small irregular lumps of ice rose and fell as the bows of the ship nosed through them. Large stretches of glassy, smooth, open water, unruffled by any breath of wind, threw back the colours of the sunset and we could see, like the imprint of feathers drawn across the water's face, shoals of "krill" dart away and scatter as we advanced. The huge triangular fin of a Killer whale rose up behind us. The Australians, shouting with amazement, ran up to the foc'sle head and leaned over the rail, watching the

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little lumps of ice brush past the bows.

"So this is it!" exclaimed one, gazing at the white horizon. "Who would have thought I'd ever see this?"

"And yet," said I sententiously, "it's at the door of Australia—only a fortnight's steaming away."

The familiar white world closed round us and the floes, becoming hourly larger, hemmed us in with their low cliffs and made the world a flat white disc around us. As we did four years ago, we pushed with poles over the stern rail to guard the screw and it was in so doing that I committed the crime of tearing a hole in the tail of the Wapiti, the huge body of which, filling the poop deck, made the management of our heavy poles a performance requiring skill and delicacy. You needed eyes at the back of your head. The Australians took a hand at this and thought it enormous fun, running from side to side of the poop, round the tail of the Wapiti, shouting. "Go on, yer silly cow!" they shouted as the space of water widened under their poles and the ship's stern swung away. On each side of the poop overhanging wooden platforms had been built on which to assemble the wings of the aeroplane and if you lay flat on your stomach upon these you could see the propeller turning slowly in the blue water or, when it raced, the sudden angry uprush of foam that hid it. Rows of bodies lay prone upon these platforms on either side of the ship, their heads hanging over the side watching the screw. The platforms bent perilously downwards under their weight. I permitted myself, as an old hand, to make non-committal prophecies about the ice, indicated "water sky," and went about saying this was nothing to the ice we encountered in the Weddell Sea four years ago. In fact the mantle of an old explorer fell upon me. This was no doubt irritating for everybody except me, but all that I said was fairly true for this ice had none of the terrors of that which

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had so nearly cost us the ship on the other side of the Continent. There was no pressuring. The floes, though enormous—many of them several hundred yards from side to side—were small in comparison with those in the Weddell Sea and the glutinous ice we had met there was, thank Heaven, absent. And frequently there were open leads of considerable size. But for those who were new to it, doubtless, it was alarming to see how apparently beset we were, hemmed in by interlocked slabs of ice the size, as Scott described them in this very place, of football fields. One of the seamen said, "Do you think we shall get out of this, sir?" To which I replied with an assurance I should not have possessed four years ago, "Of course we shall."

By the end of the fourth day of slow progress through the field of floes we had come over three hundred miles through the pack-ice and still the endless whiteness stretched around us unbroken to the horizon. From the bridge the Old Man and the Chief Officer looked upon the familiar featureless world with eyes heavy from lack of sleep. They had been on the bridge continuously, watch and watch, from the evening when we had entered the ice four days ago. They must decide now whether it would be better to push on or turn back. If there were open water to the south it must be only eighty to a hundred miles further on, and yet on all sides, south as well as north, the sky was white with the glare of ice. "Good on yer, *Discovery*!" they had shouted. "Bring him back safe!"

That evening, still in doubt, we anchored with ice-hooks to a giant floe and waited for the ice to open a little.

It was here that an incident occurred which I can hardly set down without a blush. As we lay thus anchored to our floe in the smooth dark pool of water a whale, prompted by the strange fearless curiosity of animals which have not learnt to dread mankind, arose

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from under the floes and dived and snorted around the ship. One of the activities of the expedition was the marking of whales, in order to trace their migrations, with lead-nosed darts about a foot long fired from a shortened twelve-bore gun. We carried one of these specially adapted guns in a rack in the laboratory where it remained almost permanently, for the *Discovery II* was too big for the pursuit of whales and could not be managed easily enough to get near them. From the *William Scoresby* many hundreds had been marked with these numbered darts since she was a smaller and more manageable ship. Nevertheless we did our best from the deck of *Discovery II* whenever a whale was prompted by its curiosity to come near enough. And here in this dark still pool was a chance in a thousand. I loaded a dart into the breech of the gun and stood in a sporting attitude on one of the wooden platforms which the airmen had built out from the poop. I knew that I was a rotten shot but no one else did, so I felt that my attitude was of the highest importance. The whole ship's company, sailors, cooks, stewards, firemen and the Australians, waited with breathless interest. Upon the platform, about eight feet out from the ship's side, I stood perhaps ten feet above the water. Down in the darkness beneath me there glided slowly upward a huge cigar-shaped darker shadow. A great triangular head broke the surface, gleaming not twelve feet from where I stood with my gun cocked—a perfect target. "If I can't hit this," I said with nonchalance, "I'm a Chinaman." I aimed and fired. The dart plopped into the water at least a foot from the gleaming back which, unperturbed, wheeled slowly over and disappeared into the darkness, scarcely troubling the surface. The momentary silence that greeted this effort still rings in my ears louder than the burst of laughter that immediately followed it.

The Captain was asleep but when he awoke I per-

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mitted myself a slightly more committal prophecy. I said, "There was a Fin whale around the ship an hour ago. There may be open water not far off." But over the rest of the story I drew a decent veil.

On the other side of the Antarctic Continent the *Wyatt Earp* found Charcot Island, from which she hoped to make search flights, wrapped in fog. A heavy swell ran into the pack-ice which girdled the island for fifty miles, lifting the floes and pounding them together so that the aeroplane could not take off. Heavy and impenetrable ice stood between the open sea and the land and barred all progress. Sir Hubert Wilkins, deciding not to wait, pushed westwards parallel to the coast of Antarctica, making also for the Bay of Whales and hoping to pick up radio signals from Ellsworth on the way. On the day when the *Discovery II* lay anchored to her floe waiting for the ice to open in the middle of the pack-ice belt, the *Wyatt Earp* reached the entrance to the Ross Sea but was pushed northwards by the northerly trend of the heavy ice that lay across her path.

The original plan had been that the *Wyatt Earp* was to have made search flights from Charcot Island and to have laid depots also at two other points on the coast of the Continent between there and the Ross Sea. When we heard that she had abandoned this plan and was heading westwards with all speed, making no further attempts either to make search flights or to lay depots, we hoped, forgivably perhaps, that we should reach the Bay of Whales first. We had the advantage of power but the *Wyatt Earp* was on the whole far better adapted for pushing through ice since she had a stout wooden hull, as against our shell of steel. In spite of ourselves we were glad that the *Wyatt Earp* was being pushed northwards on the day when, chafing at the delay, we lay and waited for the ice to open.

The daylight night throughout which we lay anchored to our floe passed into a grey morning and, getting under



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way early—for the ice had opened slightly, we ran suddenly and thankfully into a large open lead among the floes—a lake of iron grey water about two miles long, walled with whiteness and ruffled by a biting wind.

Oates, the Third Officer, came into the laboratory wearing enormous sea-boots, windproof jacket and Balaclava helmet. He said, "Douglas is going up in the Moth to reconnoitre. Any volunteers for the pram? He wants the pram to tow the machine into open water."

Tired of sitting still, Marr and I volunteered. Then, suddenly remembering about prams, I wished I had not, but it was too late.

"They're lowering the pram over the side now," said Oates. "We'll be ready in a quarter of an hour." On the roof of the hospital the Moth, its silver wings outspread and its canvas nose-bag removed, was being coaxed by one of the mechanics. Douglas in his flying suit and helmet was in the cockpit, coaxing from within. Presently there was a warning splutter and the cold air was rent by the increasing crackle and drone of her engines. Then the noise stopped and with the derrick they lowered her like a great dragon-fly on to the water where she straddled on her enormous yellow feet, nose towards the ship's side. We, in the pram, were to tow her tail first away from the ship and out into the middle of the open lead so that she could take off. The motor-boat was to come out from the ship and, in her turn, tow us back. It was not possible for the motor-boat to tow the aeroplane away from the ship herself for the reason, among others, that she was untrustworthy. This had to be done by arms and back muscles—in this case, thought I apprehensively, by the arms and back muscles of Marr and myself.

The motor-boat was a lady. She was a thing of whims and caprices and sudden fancies. She responded to blandishments of the right kind but often, choosing

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her moment with astonishing care, she would give a warning splutter or two and become suddenly mute as the grave—often miles from help. When this mood took her, the seaman, whose capricious charge she was, would dive into the cubby-hole that housed her engine and remain there tickling, coaxing, priming, cursing while the boat slowly drifted. Meanwhile someone else almost broke his back at the starting handle. Presently the seaman would emerge sweating and red in the face and would say, well ! he was damned if he knew. The unfortunates stranded in the boat were damned if they did either. Many times, through field-glasses, this creature of uncertain temper had been seen drifting, filled with forlorn figures, out to sea from King Edward's Cove, South Georgia. But usually, after an interval of fearful despair, she would recover her temper and start again. Whereupon everyone said that she would never be trusted again and that the internal combustion engine was an invention of the devil. But, needless to say, she always was.

Marr and I slid down the falls of the forward derrick by which the pram had been lowered into the water and sat there waiting. It was very cold. The ripples on the surface of the water seemed to be magnified where we sat so near them into giant waves and they sent the pram bobbing up and down like a cork. The grey bulk of the ship's side towered above us like a cliff. The trouble began, of course, when at a signal we set about towing the aeroplane tail first away from the ship, for Marr shipped his oars in order to take hold of one end of the tow-rope passed through a loop under the tail of the Moth. At a word he could cast adrift by letting slip the end he held. Oates had an oar out over the stern of the pram to act as a rudder so that the pulling was left to me. "Give way there !" said Oates. I gave way. One of my oars was shorter than the other and the pram immediately spun round like

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a saucer. It jerked the steering oar from Oates' hand and we watched it float away beyond recovery—a line among the choppy waves which sent up a tiny splashing upon its weather side. Oates took one of the oars which Marr had shipped and used it with vigour when the next stroke sent the pram spinning top-like round the other way. (Laughter from the audience watching over the ship's rail.) But we got the Moth out into the fairway. By the time we got her there I had already raised blisters on my hands and my muscles ached. I had caught several crabs and, with the rolling and bobbing of our tiny cockle-shell, had frequently failed to get one or the other of my oars into the water at all, knocking the tops off the waves and sending showers of spray over Marr and Oates. I was glad when Oates, at a signal from Douglas in the cockpit of the Moth, said "Easy there!" and I was able to rest on my oars, though not yet on my laurels. One of the mechanics, standing upon the float of the aeroplane, turned the propeller (or better, perhaps, the "prop") and with a stuttering roar the engine started. Marr slipped the tow-rope and, to my relief, took the other pair of oars. The Moth taxied away from us with the mechanic still standing on the float and we pulled like ten men after her. Then suddenly we heard the engine of the Moth stop and, looking round, saw her for a horrid second lift one of her great feet out of the water and dip the other wing towards the surface. The mechanic staggered and clutched at the struts for a moment and she righted herself. The engine roared again. We pulled up to her and the mechanic jumped into the pram. Then she was off. Plumes of spray shot outwards from her floats as she rushed towards the other side of the lead. When we thought she must surely strike the ice floes on the further side of the great stretch of water she rose and became a bird, soaring with grace and power round and up towards the hurrying clouds. Soon she was a

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tiny insect alternately veiled and revealed by the shifting grey wraiths through which she sped.

But now we had to get back to the ship which, unable to remain long stationary for fear of ice floes drifting down upon her, had during the whole of this time been cruising slowly round the lead. She was now a little toy ship nearly two miles away. Of the motor-boat which was to tow us back to her there was no sign. She was apparently in a bad mood. Against the wind we pulled. Marr and I had the only pairs of oars so that Oates and the mechanic, sitting on the stern thwart, could do nothing except offer to take a turn from time to time. And to allow this we were too proud. Before long I wished we did not have to be so proud, for the stiff and freshening wind was against us and the rising chop on the water lolloped loudly against the shallow upturned bows of our silly little boat. At every stroke we drifted with the wind further back away from the ship and nearer to the long floe which bounded one side of the lead. Now we could see the little capes and indentations on its low, white cliffs and the sapphire blues that lurked in its hollows. Now we could hear the waves flip-flapping against it where it overhung. My wrists and forearms, unaccustomed to so much exercise, were now aching so that they were almost useless. Water blisters had burst on my palms and the tips of my fingers were icy cold. But James Marr pulled steadily and evenly as a sailor pulls, or as I have seen Cornish fishermen pull, sitting a little sideways on his thwart. As for me, I caught crabs. I chopped the waves. I sent up glittering showers of spray. And we made no progress at all for every second the floe astern of us drew nearer. Three penguins shot out of the water on to it and stood watching us with fatuous and infuriating unconcern. "Take it slowly," said Marr. "You'll find it much easier." I had been pulling with short strokes largely to get my oars in at the troughs

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of the waves so as to knock the tops off them as little as possible with the backward sweep of the oar. But even when I altered my stroke we made very little progress for the wind was freshening every minute. Suddenly Oates said, "Keep it up. The motor-boat's coming." I looked over my shoulder and saw her, with relief, as a black speck far off with plumes of white at her bows. It was an encouraging spectacle. My waning spirits revived. "The last lap," I thought and, redoubling our efforts, we kept abreast of the wind or even, perhaps, made a little headway. Soon we could hear the splutter of the motor-boat's engine and could see the figures in her. It was almost over. Very soon she would pick us up. We rested on our oars, panting, seeing stars, warming our ice-cold fingers, waiting thankfully to be picked up. As we waited and gave thanks we drifted without noticing it back before the wind the whole of the way we had come and further so that the low cliff of ice enlarged towards us again. But we did not care—it did not matter now. The blood came back into my finger tips with a kind of pleasantly endurable pain. Suddenly we became aware of silence. The motor-boat's engine had stopped and she, too, was drifting on to the floe broadside on to the wind. We could see three dejected figures in her peering down impotently while a fourth bent convulsively over the starting handle. And for us there was nothing for it but to begin all over again. Despair took hold of us. We said wearily, "Now I suppose we'll have to tow the damned motor-boat." And the ship was further away than ever, seemingly miles away, a speck without motion. Luckily, however, one of the Australian mechanics was in the motor-boat. He knew the language and spoke it as a lady likes to hear it, but even he afterwards confessed himself nearly baffled by this beauty. "The old cow sure nearly had me beat," he said. Just as the motor-boat was almost on to the floe the engine, yielding to

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Australian blandishments, stuttered into life. Advance Australia ! Made fast to her stern we thankfully but wearily rode home, our saucer-like bows high out of the water, flapping against the waves and throwing aside showers of spray.

The Moth came roaring down out of the clouds. She raced low over the ship and, banking round a mile away, came gently to rest with her nose to the ship's side—an exhibition of skill which drew a murmur of admiration from the crowd watching from the decks. From two thousand feet up among the grey veils above us Douglas had seen a close mosaic or irregular white patches upon a matrix of inky black. It stretched in every direction as far as the eye could see. Here and there were broader streaks of black. Far below him the ship, tiny and alone, was a speck in this gigantic white crazy pavement. "No open water but good leads," said Douglas, coming down from the cockpit. "And my word ! You didn't half look lost and lonely down there !"

We got under way again. Next day Douglas went up once more in the Moth but when Oates came into the laboratory asking for volunteers I, for one, said that I would go like a shot were I not suddenly and unaccountably busy that morning. He found an ordinary seaman who did excellently.

The same day the *Wyatt Earp* turned south again and, with the wind behind her, pushed on in hot pursuit through long leads of open water. She gained on us that day and we began to think that all our labour and the Captain's anxiety had been in vain. But that evening, white against a dark sky, there shot up suddenly in the distance a plume among the ice floes. It hung and vanished. Then another and another. I permitted myself to prophesy again. "Those are Blue whales. There must be open water ahead."

Very early next morning the floes thinned out and,

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in a little over seventy-three degrees south, we left them and came into another world. A gigantic iceberg nearly two hundred feet high stood like a bastion guarding the way. We had won.

F. D. OMMANEY, *South Latitude* (1938)

## BY AIR TO TIBET

THE journey here described may with some justice be called unusual, since, apart from the survivors of the Younghusband expedition and certain officers of the Indian Army and Government, they are comparatively few who have accomplished it. Travel within the Tibetan frontiers involves obvious difficulties, of which one is an unpredictable degree of physical discomfort. But such a journey as ours, when regarded as a journey among journeys, can make no claim to be considered unique or even remarkable: the difficulties were overcome with moderate effort; the knowledge gained was such as to satisfy only the personal curiosity of those who sought it. In thus unloosing a second torrent of personal anecdote I have but one purpose and excuse; which is, if I can, to please the reader with some pale reflection of the quality of pure enjoyment which became known to me during my first visit to Asia Magna. To travel in Europe is to assume a foreseen inheritance; in Islam, to inspect that of a close and familiar cousin. But to travel in further Asia is to discover a novelty previously unsuspected and unimaginable. It is not a question of probing this novelty, of analysing its sociological, artistic, or religious origins, but of learning, simply, that it exists. Suddenly, as it were in the opening of an eye, the potential world—the field of man and his environment—is doubly extended. The stimulus is inconceivable to those who have not experienced it.

If, as I think must be so, the European can attain this

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experience most vividly in Asia, it is to Asia north of the Himalayas that he should go. There the very face of the earth, the atmospherics, clouds, and colours, are absolved from all known criteria. And there, in Tibet, alone of the world's political compartments, have the effects of the scientific revolution not yet intruded on the outward picture of everyday life.

From an early age the fact of Tibet's existence had coloured my thoughts, fastened there by "Y for YAK" on a zoological alphabet. Later, in course of some military operations with my school O.T.C. near Goring, a friend and I fell to concerting fabulous schemes for our future betterment: a visit to Tibet was one; but, we agreed, the most fabulous. With the coming of responsibility the purpose waned, as other purposes such as engine-driving had waned before it. Until one day came a letter from India, tempting me with "a trip to Sikkim." Sikkim?—the atlas showed a small state in the Himalayas bordering on Tibet. Obviously, I might even see a yak in Sikkim. But why Sikkim? Why not Tibet?

Modern literary travellers are divided into those to whom expense is no obstacle, and those who profit from an absolute lack of any money whatsoever to achieve picturesque suffering and strange companions. I myself escape these categories. Unaccustomed to starvation, and preferring, at all times, luxury to squalor, I had neither desire nor intention of beachcombing my way to Central Asia. Simultaneously, to effect even the preliminary voyage to India under conditions of normal comfort seemed a matter of prohibitive cost. Yet the phantom, once invoked, would not be laid. Go I must, and set myself to will the means. How they occurred, by what slender fortuity, was an event that still leaves me breathless when I think of it.

I had been asked to join a party for supper after the theatre. It promised little entertainment: at first



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I refused ; then went unwillingly, and still more unwillingly to a subterranean night-club. There I sat, scarcely able to keep awake and preparing an abrupt good-bye, when there entered an acquaintance, who informed me that Lord Beaverbrook was in search of new writers. This particular acquaintance I had not seen for two years, and but for my weak-mindedness in sitting up when I should have been asleep, might not have seen for another two.

It was already plain to me that since the initial difficulty of reaching India at all was to all intents and purposes insurmountable, I had best aim at travelling by the most expensive route possible. This was the Air Mail, which had then been only a week or two in regular service. If Lord Beaverbrook wanted new writers, he might want new subjects also. Let me offer both.

Next day, thanks to the good offices of our mutual friend, I visited Lord Beaverbrook. Undeterred by the exuberant presence of Lord Castlerosse, I treated my host to several profound thoughts (hastily formulated in the taxi) on the more effective welding of our imperial ties ; observing, though without undue emphasis, what a vista of possibilities had been opened by this new route to the East. My seed, though I did not know it, fell on a rich plough. For a fortnight later Lord Beaverbrook's Empire Free Trade Campaign burst on the public.

I pursued this advantage. Numerous conversations followed. I even attempted, without success, to write on my chosen theme for the *Evening Standard*. But my plans got no further, and the theme was outside my knowledge. Meanwhile, if I was going to India, the time was rapidly arriving when I must come to a decision as to dates and make arrangements. At length, one sunny June morning, I sat with Lord Beaverbrook in his garden overlooking the Park, and I asked him in

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plain terms whether he was prepared to pay my passage to India in return for some articles. He knew, as I knew, that no articles on such a subject could possibly be worth £126 in the open market of journalism. But with a generosity which the march of politics can never efface, he assented, walked indoors, and reaching for an ivory telephone, gave the necessary instructions to his office.

I informed my family of the good news, and feared some possible objections on their part to the hazards of the new route. My mother, however, could think of nothing but the drawing-rooms of Anglo-Indian relatives. All she asked was that I should not bring home a Buddha. My elder sister supposed that now I should have to become a sahib. "*Are you a sahib?*" she inquired dubiously. My younger sister, recalling the field of my previous activities, muttered under her breath: "Now it'll be tribes instead of monks." My father remained acquiescent, merely toying with the probabilities and pains of sunstroke.

During the ensuing weeks my parents' ears were filled with the precautions taken by past and present administrators of the Indian Empire, men and women of all ages and complexions, to preserve their health. One had worn a tummy-belt for forty years; another had taken a nightly dose of quinine over the same length of time. One thing was certain: my instant demise could be averted only by a miracle; and the chances of that miracle would be dangerously handicapped by a first arrival in the hot weather. Reluctantly I submitted to various inoculations. The aeroplane was to leave on Saturday. On Friday morning I enjoyed the important sensation of a farewell lunch at the Ritz, attended by Miss Tilly Losch. That evening numerous friends sent me telegrams, couched as though I were going to execution. My ticket lay fatting in a breast pocket, a book of coupons for lunch in this country,

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dinner in that, and transit in between. I spent till midnight fitting clothes, medicaments, and stationery into a kit-bag and a blue revelation suitcase.

The morning of Saturday July 27 brought a feeling of relief, as though it were the first day of the holidays. Whatever the horrors in store, at least they could be met passively, and without the exercise of that wearing initiative demanded by the packing of an unprotected bottle. At nine o'clock I reached Airways House in Charles Street. Body and baggage, I weighed two and a half pounds under the permitted complement. At the aerodrome we hurried through passages and barriers, and emerged from a door to find the *City of Wellington* buzzing and roaring on the threshold ; its three enormous propellers threatened our hats with their wind. I crept up the diminutive gangway to my seat. A door shut. And the machine cantered across the aerodrome, turned, galloped back, and rose above a sea of small red houses.

My first sensation was one of suffocating depression. But for a quarter of an hour in a tin and canvas flea, which looped the loop for an extra 7s. 6d. and fell in half the week after, I had never flown before. And I now beheld myself in a dark cabin scarcely five feet across, twisting about in a constricted wicker space, and convinced that my whole being would soon disintegrate altogether under pressure of sheer noise. A long dormant home-sickness rose within me, an ache for train or boat, the old and comfortable friends of travel. A trip to Paris might be borne. But to contemplate the continuance of this inferno of drill, buzz, and roar, and these attitudes of a strait-jacket, for eight days on end was to relinquish faith in the beneficence of earthly fate. My mother's good-bye assumed an aspect of tragedy. I dreamt of the lazy days on deck that might have been, or the blue velvet of a wagon-lit, to take the place of these preposterous cretonne curtains,

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over-waisted and functionless as those of a doll's house. When Air-Marshal Sir Geoffrey Salmond, seeking to levitate himself from the chair behind, accidentally rapped me on the head, I all but turned and knocked him through the aeroplane. Only the merry-go-round motion of the bumps provided some relief, which was increased to pleasure by the sight of several passengers at their cuspidors.

As we rose to between three and four thousand feet, the patchwork of English fields, heavily embroidered in elms, disappeared in a haze. A line proclaimed the channel, and, after half an hour's gloom, another the coast of France. Here the patchwork was cleaner, strips and squares of ripened corn interspersed with larger and more irregular shapes of green velvet woodland; occasionally a white road showed like a lining beneath, with sometimes a stumpwork of trees along it. One o'clock found us at Le Bourget, lunching beneath a wallpaper of inebriate birds. Those around us ate delicious omelettes. We, coming from England, were treated to a parody of our national beef.

At two o'clock we embarked again for Basle. At lunch I had made the acquaintance of a professional journalist, named Butcher, who said he loathed flying, but flew everywhere for copy. He was now sick. Eventually hills appeared, and clouds, the latter suffusing the cabin with an odd winter light. Then the town lay beneath us, and we glided down to the Birsfelden aerodrome, where the customs house was adorned with a series of excellent modern frescoes, depicting "Porterage." Hence a bus took us to the Hotel Euler. The drive revealed the "Crewe of Switzerland" as a charming, shady town, with many old houses, fountains, and flower-beds. The local zoo was advertised with posters of seals.

From the hotel I went to the Kunsthalle, which, though officially shut, was in fact open. The barkings

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of a dog brought its master, who, on my explaining that I had come by aeroplane especially to see El Greco's *Laocoön*, admitted me to the galleries. Unfortunately this picture was no longer there. It has since appeared in London. The main interest of the collection was the Holbeins, which included the famous miniature of Erasmus in old age, and a water-colour of Edward VI of England holding a small, flap-eared dog. The keeper drew my attention to the phantasies of his fellow-citizen Böcklin, who enjoyed a great vogue about 1880.

After dining on the terrace of the hotel, and surrendering the requisite coupons from our tickets, the party, now depleted to five, proceeded to the station, accompanied by various officials of Imperial Airways carrying the sticks, coats, and parcels that had been left behind. "We have to treat our passengers like children," they observed resignedly. The train was in; wagon-lits were reserved; we disposed our baggage; but there was no engine. This arrived three-quarters of an hour late, and then rushed through the Alps at an immense pace, interrupted by halts of such violence that on one occasion I fell out of bed.

Morning dawned in northern Italy. More of the company's officials, smartly uniformed in blue serge and gold braid, met us at Genoa. "They don't half run the houses up here," remarked one passenger, who had not been in Italy before. After traversing the untidiest port in the world, we came to a small barge, the property of the S.A.N.A. (*Società Anonima Navigazione Aerea*), where poached eggs and strawberry jam lay inviting on a table.

Already the heat was sweltering. Out in the harbour glittered the white Calcutta flying-boat, the *City of Rome*, with a small Union Jack fluttering from its cockpit. After a slight delay, caused by the checking of the mails, we went off in a launch. The Union Jack was furled

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the hatch closed ; we were away. The rise of a flying-boat, particularly when there is a swell, resembles all that Luna Park just fails to achieve. The engines roar ; the floats on the wings dip, first on one side, then on the other ; at each wave a great bump lifts the machine. The speed increases, clouds of spray lash the portholes ; till suddenly we have exchanged elements and the sea is beneath. After circling a good-bye to the seaplane base, we set off to the south, leaving the coast of Italy on our left. One of the party, Captain Bennett-Baggs, whose stature was such that he exceeded in personal weight the full quota allowed each passenger with his luggage, took the second controls.

A pleasanter and more intimate atmosphere now prevailed. The portholes once opened, it was cooler ; the noise was less, the engines being set behind, on the wings ; and the seats of inflated leather allowed freer movement. Outside, the wings gleamed white against the lapis of the Mediterranean 500 feet below, and the floats beneath them looked like huge silver fishes accidentally caught out of the deep. From time to time the wireless operator sent us messages : Elba on the right, Leghorn on the left. In due course, we passed over Ostia, circling a salute to the seaplane base, where we could see the Dornier-Wal machines lying each in its little dock. According to schedule, we should have lunched there ; but the water was too shallow for a safe descent. Instead, the engineer now produced a typical Italian lunch of ham, salami, chicken, new rolls, cheese, Russian mushrooms, nectarines, and wine. These we ate from tin trays, which slid up from the backs of the chairs like prayer-book racks. There were two forks, three glasses, and one cup, to assist us.

Another note arrived, asking if we wished to fly over Vesuvius and look down the crater. We did. But when the Bay of Naples came round the corner, a cloud was covering the top of the mountain. The town and

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its dependencies, stretching in a circuit of thirty miles round the shore, presented a gorgeous panorama in the golden glitter of a southern afternoon, as we passed between Ischia and the mainland, flew over Posilipo, and came spirally down upon the harbour. New officials met us. The customs obliterated themselves. On the bus, we talked of Mussolini as Mr. Smith, and of the pleasures of Capri in yet more cryptic terms.

After a bath at the Hotel Excelsior, I drove out beyond Posilipo, and off the main road down a one-way track enclosed between the high mud walls of vineyards. This led to a gate, within which rows of painfully watered carnations bespoke the Englishman's determination to carry his home with him. P. was in the drive, clad only in vest and trousers, and abounding in classical lore. Here was the rock, like so many rocks in this neighbourhood, where Vergil wrote the *Aeneid*; there the palace of Lucullus, its painted rooms still intact; beyond, the tunnel which Sejanus, minister to Tiberius, cut through the rock to the same main road, rather than use the drive which my taxi had reluctantly negotiated. The R.'s must endure it, as the tunnel is a national monument, and must therefore be permitted to fall into decay.

Having undressed, we descended the cliff on which the villa stands by a series of other tunnels and quarried steps, to bathe. It was like a home-coming to float once more on the buoyant waters of the Mediterranean, and swim with an ease that two years' absence from the sea had made me forget. We plucked a fat sea-urchin from a rock, which the gardener later identified as a female. At dinner, the food was from the sea, the wine from the garden. Mussolini was here referred to as Mr. Jones. P.'s brother, then in the Air Force, said that before coming out to Italy he had received rigid instructions not to speak to, or be spoken to, by any member of the corresponding Italian service, for fear

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of being thought a spy. Afterwards, we sat looking over the bay, a semicircle of quivering yellow stars in the blackness. Up in the sky hovered a stationary comet. This was Vesuvius : the railway its tail, and the observatory its body.

Recalling my obligations to the *Daily Express*, I made ado to return, eventually leaving in a pony-cart drawn by a diminutive brown Pegasus, which had no thought for the ravines that yawned beneath each corner. A tram was waiting on the main road, which took me back to the hotel. I sat up till one o'clock composing an article, and rose again at five to type it.

Unbuttoned, unshaven, and unfed, I clattered into the hall at a quarter-past seven, to find the other passengers already waiting. At a quarter to eight we were off again, crossed the instep of Italy with an occasional bump, touched the southernmost point of the Gallipoli peninsula, and, an hour later, landed in the harbour of Corfu for lunch. I had last spent seven hours of an April day here, painting an island, which had then been green and yellow. To see it now dull brown gave me a shock. Above us, the lion of St. Mark spoke of Venice. An argument with officials ensued, who forbade us to disembark our cameras, though we could see a party of German tourists busily taking photographs on the cliff above our heads. It were as though the fact of travelling by air had invested us with supernatural powers of espionage. To settle the matter, I produced a *laissez-passer* from the Greek Minister in London ; whereupon, to the astonishment of the rest of the party, I was hailed as a "friend of Greece" and permitted anything. During lunch, Sir Geoffrey Salmond said that he might be old-fashioned, but that *All Quiet on the Western Front* was not a book to leave in the drawing-room. Butcher replied with a perk of surprise that all that sort of thing was ended now, and wasn't he a bit behind the times? To which the



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Air-Marshal sighed : " Well, I suppose there are drawing-rooms and drawing-rooms." He then recalled that Corfu had once been British, and what bloody fools we were the way we always gave a good thing away. It was on the tip of my tongue to hope for a similar restoration of Cyprus from the Labour Government, but I was too content to be in Greece again to bother with an argument.

After examining an Italian Dornier-Wal monoplane, and a French machine which was painted an aesthetic orange and bringing mails from Beyrut, we flew round to the back of the island to see the Achilleion, the palace built by the Empress Elizabeth of Austria, and later vulgarised by the Kaiser. Then we continued southward along the coast, till an easterly turn took us inland over flat marshy country. Being anxious to take a photograph of Byron's death-place, Captain Stocks, the pilot, invited me into the cockpit, where I perched my feet on two aluminium platforms behind him. As I stood, my head and chest were above the wind-screen, and, since the propellers were behind, could remain there without discomfort. Below us, a marshy plain stretched into the distance ; to the left, mountains ; to the right, mountains ; in between, patches of water reflecting the blue sky ; and all the land emitting that subtle rosy glitter which is Greece. And here was I, on my fourth visit in five years, arriving in the sky—arriving not with rush and hurricane, as may be imagined ; but moving with measure and circumstance through the blue vault ; the great wings spreading like a house behind me ; and the pilot at my feet finding it superfluous to exercise more than the slightest control over so rational and self-sufficient an instrument of locomotion. The sensation was superb and like no other. A ship is always on the water, a dependent, humbler than the humblest wave. This proud vehicle, on this unflecked, sunny afternoon, asked no visible

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substance for support. Standing with head bare, drunk with the wind that tossed my hair and ran over my skin beneath a fluttering shirt, I travelled as sovereign of the universe, a solar emperor.

As Missolonghi approached, I descended from my perch to the space intervening between the cabin and the cockpit, where the wireless operator sits. Here was a porthole from which, at a whistle from Stocks, I achieved a successful picture, taking care to keep the bellows of the camera out of the line of the wind. The wireless operator, who assisted, was Mr. Stone, familiarly known as "Sparks," whose personality kept me happy during the whole voyage. His round eyes and small piscine mouth suggested some ever-present outrage, until, at short intervals, the whole face would expand into a coil of smiles as ripples spread over disturbed water. The face is a sad memory, for Stone, with Pembroke the engineer, was drowned when the *City of Rome* sank with four passengers just outside Genoa in the following October.

At length we reached the Gulf of Corinth, flying close round the great obelisk of a mountain which stands at its entrance, and which, for those on shipboard, is the first real view of Greece. There lay Patras, spattered white over the opposing shore ; there Lepanto, a brown village beneath us ; there, across the peacock water, the S.P.A.P. railway running along the coast. In an hour we were over Corinth. The same trains were in the station ; the same restaurant where I have eaten so many odd things on so many odd journeys ; the same slag-heaps whence I had paddled on my second day in Greece. The Gulf curved round to meet itself, to end, but for that diminutive incision which leads to the Aegean. Along the Canal and over its bridge we flew, while a toy train puffed laboriously across it, and a still more farcical boat crawled stealthily along the bottom of the reef. At length, as we rounded Salamis,

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the chimneys of Piraeus hove in sight, followed by the Acropolis and the twisted cone of Lykabettus.

In Athens, to my disappointment, Imperial Airways had arranged for us to stay at the Acropole Palace, a new hotel having a bathroom to each bedroom, but situate in a low, slummy quarter of the town, and lacking that maturity of personnel which is essential to comfort. A flood of reunions awaited me. I learnt that the bookshop had sold fifteen copies of my last book. Dr. Zervos presented me with a basket of Mocca coffee which had actually grown in Mocca. Later we assembled at the Hotel Grande Bretagne, where Stocks, Bennett-Baggs, and the Air-Marshals were already installed in the bar. Dinner we ate at Mr. Rompapa's open-air restaurant in the Zappeion gardens, newly surrounded by an artistic trellis-work. At midnight I dropped asleep as I sat. The other party sat drinking till four o'clock.

On Tuesday morning we left the hotel at the comparatively reasonable hour of half-past nine. Just outside Piraeus we circled low over a capsized fishing-boat, a grisly wreck in the crystal blue water, and wirelessly a description of it to the mainland. Butcher, the Air-Marshals, and myself were now alone. A following wind brought us to Suda Bay in Crete by half-past twelve, where a welcome effusively and lavishly English greeted us. For the company had stationed here a yacht, the *Imperia*, formerly the property of numerous millionaires, and able to ride any sea in case of a forced descent in bad weather. A bathe from the side, which, like all Greek bathes, will live in the memory for ever, was followed by a six-course lunch set at a table whose posy of flowers might have come from an English garden. Our appetites were sharpened by the witticisms of Captain MacLeod and Chief Officer Horn, who had lately been described in the English Press as "Adams in an Eveless Eden."

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That afternoon Captain Stocks again permitted me the joy of sitting in the cockpit. The White Mountains, legendary home of the human vampire, were cloudless, and he decided to fly across the island and through them by a broad pass, which I had already traversed on foot two years before. Stocks had told us how, one evening in the dark, he was attempting this course, when the altimeter stuck ; the pass was approaching ; he was unable to make the requisite height ; until, frightened and desperate, he knocked the dial, and the hand jumped up three thousand feet. Such were my own sensations now. With the nose of our great winged ship tilted upward, swaying slightly, dropping suddenly, leaping up again, we made as though to crash into the huge barren hillside, as the vineyards and cypresses gave place to a speckling of rock and scrub. Stocks tapped the altimeter, which this time did not shoot upwards. On which—though it afterwards transpired that my apprehensions were simply the result of optical delusion, and that we actually had plenty of room—we turned, avoiding, as it seemed, the encircling mountains by a hair's-breadth, and executed a broad spiral to increase our height. Then we went straight for the pass. Still my optical delusions persisted. At every bump, as the mountain currents tossed us from side to side and the wings dipped up and down, the escarpments and rocky slopes leapt into threatening proximity. I looked down. There was the road up which I had motored on a cold October morning ; there the house where I had found my mules ; there the village where an escort of police had joined me ; and there, cleaving the pass itself to a depth of a thousand feet, the airless gorge down which I had picked my way, a black thread twisting and bulging as it led down towards the sea. We were over. Suddenly the island dropped away from us, and the smoother southern slopes, arid brown in the summer heat, fell down to the

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village of Sphakia, where I had slept the night in a policeman's blanket already inhabited. From the top of Mount Ida on our left to the bottom of the sea fifteen miles out the earth's surface drops some 23,000 feet. As the island receded behind us, it seemed as though any moment might see us engulfed in this appalling abyss. Slowly and safely we descended, till the flat blue sea gradually developed a warp and woof, and at last each wave could be personally distinguished. We were heading southward for the coast of Africa.

There was something impressive about this transition, in the space of two hours, from one continent to another. From Spain, the change is not so great; the coasts resemble one another. But here, as the line of dead orange limiting the inky sapphire sea stretched interminably on into the distance, it was plain that this was a land like no other, endowed with different shapes, colours, and lights, a vast land of black races and of strange self-centred cultures that have remained isolated from the great movements of taste between Europe and Asia. As the aeroplane circled over the harbour of Tobruk, a burnt plain of measureless extent was disclosed, rippled but never hilly, and merging, fifty, a hundred, a thousand miles away, into a horizon of opal mist. I looked involuntarily for Capetown. I seemed to recognise the place. Then I thought of Egyptian art, and the recognition was explained.

Tobruk, the only landmark for hundreds of miles along this desert union of land and water, is the capital of the Italian province of Cyrenaica, and the centre of a sponge-fishery conducted by the Greek divers of the Dodecanese. The town consists of an area of mud shanties, interspersed with one or two official buildings and guarded by a wall fortified with barbed wire, outside which no Italian dares venture. Only recently, said Stocks, he had arrived to find the quay covered with dead and wounded. Into a crowd of Arabs and

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negroes, gathered on the one pier, and tattered and draped in the proverbial colours of the East, we stepped ashore. Tea was waiting in a small café, behind which, adjoining a courtyard filled with embarrassing domesticities, was the Imperial Airways' agent's bed- and sitting-room. The latter he placed at my disposal, whence, after composing another article for the *Daily Express*, I emerged in a stream of perspiration to bathe. The Governor, a depressed man wearing pince-nez, kindly lent us his Ford, and also, since we were proposing to leave the town, supplied us with an escort, lest a hostile force (silhouetted, on camels, as in Purilia) should appear from over the horizon and steal our clothes. As we drove along, bent and ragged old Arabs, seeing the official flag floating from the mudguard, favoured us with the Fascist salute, which looked more than usually ridiculous under such circumstances. The agent told us afterwards that they have a deadly hatred of the Italians, and that the latter are literally not permitted to leave the town at all except in the bathing season, and then only for a distance of 500 yards. The water was delicious ; but not Greek.

Sir Geoffrey Salmond was staying at the Residency, and Stocks, Butcher, and myself dined alone on a verandah overlooking the harbour. The agent, who was only nineteen, had written out an elaborate menu. Stocks talked of his early trips during the inauguration of the service, of the difficulties of obtaining petrol, the lack of mechanics, and his own consequent sleeplessness. The crisis had come when a hungry débutante, returning from India with her father, had reached up into the rack and gobbled down the crew's lunch. Butcher said that the Air-Marshall seemed a wiry man for his age. Stocks said *tough* was the word. We gave him much credit for his charm of manner towards the personnel of the route.

As we left Genoa, there had appeared in the sea below

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us a yacht similar to that stationed in Suda Bay, which was then on its way to Tobruk for the accommodation of passengers. Unaware of this, however, an enterprising inhabitant had taken and furnished a house in the back of the town, in which we were now put to sleep. Through the windows came the sound of dervishes' drums. The rooms were tall and clean, and boasted mosquito-nets and plush-covered chairs. On being called at half-past four, I discovered a cement pool filled with cold water, and was able to enjoy a bathe.

After breakfasting in the same café, we took off at five minutes to six. The colour of the water was astounding—a sharp, deep scarab-blue, beside which even the Greek sea seemed pale. Inland, the desert stretched for ever, with no sign of a human being. We crossed the Italian frontier, a range of low hills, and dropped a bundle of newspapers at Mersa Matruh, where we observed, painted in large letters on a roof, "HILLIER'S GUEST HOUSE." It was here subsequently, after two successive accidents, that the Maharani of Cooch Behar dried her clothes and slept, while William Gerhardi bound up the heel which the propeller had all but removed. The weather had been rough; the *City of Rome* had sunk that very week. Stocks, who had fortunately escaped that disaster owing to illness, was their pilot. In trying to take off he struck a buoy. After two or three hours a rescue machine arrived, and they set off again, only to hit a reef. Water rushed into the cabin; and they all emerged on to the roof, whence a boat took such of them as the propellers had left intact to shore again. I was in Calcutta at the time, and my letters arrived stampless and stained with seawater.

At a quarter-past eleven came the beginnings of Alexandria. As we passed Lake Mariut, an extraordinary illusion presented itself. The water, owing to

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excessive saltness and the angle of the sun, shone solutely white ; while a long shadow, probably caused mist, exactly coincided with its farther shore. The ect was that of a snow-clad hill rising against a November sky. Beyond, the town stretched enormous. e circled over the harbour and came down in front King Fuad's palace.

On the quay we parted from the Air-Marshal, who as continuing his journey by Air Force machines. adly I said good-bye to Stocks, who had been a host as well as a pilot, and whose visitors' book, now at the ottom of the Gulf of Genoa, we had all signed. I ook hands with Pembroke and Stone. And turned o find Mr. Casulli, an acquaintance of three years ago, aiting to greet me with a gleaming La Salle car. Having lately been reading those scarce and entertaining publications, E. M. Forster's *Guide to Alexandria* and is *Pharos and Pharillon*, I anxiously inquired the site of re old lighthouse, whose ground reflector, illumined y a giant bonfire, was one of the wonders of Antiquity. As we drove along the sea-front, the tall houses, with heir weathered, plum-coloured bricks and ancient imbering, were strangely reminiscent of our own Tudor rchitecture. At Mr. Casulli's office the cashier bore he appropriate name of Athanasius. Mr. Casulli alked of the horrors of the cotton-market. Then we rove out to his house to lunch—a palatial residence ecorated in the Victorian Arab style and set in a garden of flowering shrubs and trees. Madame Casulli aid that her children's English governesses always nsulted her because they were not supplied with English ood.

The new aeroplane was timed, according to our information, to leave at two o'clock. Aboukir aerodrome is some twenty miles from Alexandria. Mr. Casulli drove his La Salle at between sixty and seventy miles



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an hour through the burning heat, past his own farm, where he grows bananas, dates and cotton, and breeds Arab horses, till as far as King Fuad's palace, where the road, no longer subject to royal criticism, changed character and obliged him to slow down. We reached Aboukir with five minutes to spare, to discover that the mails from the *City of Rome* had not yet arrived. Consequently there was a delay of an hour. The other passengers, who were also waiting about, included two directors of the French air mail from Marseilles to Beyrut, and a Persian boy returning to Teheran after four years' school in York.

Eventually we took off at three o'clock in the *City of Cairo*, a powerful machine, able to climb on two of its three engines. The route lay over the northern border of "the Wilderness," that land where the children of Israel wandered and suffered and children of Christian education continue to do likewise. Very strange it looked in the afternoon light, a sea of dunes, each rotund hummock casting an elliptical blue shadow on the golden sand, till all were absorbed into a horizon of jagged, opalescent mountains. The villages were few—small clusters of square mud buildings accompanied by occasional palms and sparse scratches of cultivation. Sometimes camels were returning to them along tracks dotted serpentwise among the dunes. Even from a thousand and two thousand feet, every footprint was visible.

We reached Gaza for tea. The Imperial Airways' hangar and hostel lie some way out of the town, on the site of the various battles which took place here during the war, and of which the Turks generally had the advantage. A former gunner was among the passengers, and as he had been badly wounded on this spot, and had not seen it since, we allowed him to indulge his reminiscences. The British trenches, which we later visited, were still littered with bones and shredded cloth-

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Live bombs are also found, which the local gipsies for killing fish, to the outrage of resident sportsmen. At we were now under the beneficent shadow of a fish mandate, was recalled to me by the following conversation :—

L.B. (*to the Hostel Superintendent*) : That's a nice Niel you've got there.

SUPERINTENDENT : Yes. Damn good with birds.

L.B. : Have you been shooting much round here ?

SUPERINTENDENT : Don't you *know* that the grouse season doesn't open till August the twelfth ?

The hostel was comfortably planned, a double line one-storey buildings containing bedrooms, showers, a dining-room, and offices for the staff and mails. In front, a garden was in the making, a geometrical arrangement of whitewashed stones, in which bananas, geraniums, and one eucalyptus had been planted among the geraniums. Here tea was waiting, surrounded by wicker chairs.

On my suggestion that we might bathe, the superintendent produced a car, and Butcher, the gunner, and myself motored down the seven miles to the sea. The fishermen declined to come ; they had had " assez de transport." On the way we passed through the town, which, as my readers will remember, was formerly stronghold of the Philistines. Amos, Zephaniah, and Jeremiah heaped their curses on the place ; " baldness come upon Gaza," asseverated Jeremiah. While Amos, very rightly threatened by the inhabitants for practices inimical to public morality during his first night's sojourn, snatched away the town gates. The scene of this exploit is now identified as lying on the left of the general store. Historians may cavil. But they cannot, we were glad to learn, question the survival of Delilahs.

By the time we reached the shore, twilight was

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deepening. A furious orange sunset marked the limit of the sea, against which a three-masted brigantine lay anchored in silhouette. We hurriedly undressed beneath a thatched shelter, and avoiding the melon-rind with which the shore was strewn, stepped into water which was almost too hot to be refreshing. Slow oily waves lifted us on to the jagged edges of concealed rocks. A fisherman's line became entangled in my legs. It grew wholly dark. On the way back the driver informed us that he had just spent £5000 on planting and maturing a grove of Jaffa oranges.

Dinner was nasty and inadequate. Since, however, the hostel superintendent had only just recovered from one nervous breakdown, and avowed himself threatened with another at the prospect of exposure in the *Daily Express*, I told him that the catering was beyond all expectation. The Frenchmen were patently dissatisfied. But as there was no single person present with whom they could communicate unless I chose to assist them, they suffered in silence. After dinner we agreed that the French understand the English better than the English can ever understand the French.

On Thursday morning we were called with tea at five o'clock, and then told to go to sleep again as the mail train from Port Said had broken down, according to its usual custom. At seven we breakfasted off kippers, which Captain Alcock, our pilot and brother of Sir John, had brought from Alexandria. Then the arriving mails were found to be heavier than expected, and the aeroplane had to be relieved of a corresponding amount of petrol. By this time the superintendent was positively haggard. We took off at eight o'clock, flew over Bethlehem, caught a glimpse of Jerusalem such as Richard Cœur de Lion must have had, and came to the sinister depression of the Dead Sea where the Jordan, a sluggish stream, leaves it, carrying a bed of green up the landscape in much the same way as it does on

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ysical maps. In front, the Moabite mountains extended before us. The formation of the whole country is most extraordinary, resembling a giant architecture. domes and towers, temples of ribbed ornament, bulging minarets, obelisks and cenotaphs, façades and dorsal ridges, were endlessly repeated, to form a natural municipality of impalpable burning rock, from whose bottomless streets wraiths of opal colour came floating in the vast cracked perpendiculars. What wonder that the Chosen, crawling ant-like about their pastoral pursuits, evolved the forbidding deity for which this landscape must answer posterity, as the coasts of Greece answer for the evolution of form and sense?

By degrees the cliffs and canyons grew less, till they merged into a sandy plateau strewn with black stones. Here, for no apparent reason, we suddenly began to descend. The explosion of rockets, which the pilot went out to find the direction of the wind, sounded like an engine failure. Alarm was dispelled by the sight of a small metal circle, such as usually communicates from the pavement to the coal-cellar, set by itself in the middle of the desert, up to which we manoeuvred in a storm of sand, and which in fact gave access to a tank of petrol. A quarter of a mile away stood the fort of Kasr Kharana, a ruin, in whose upper chambers skeletons lay still in their clothes. "Hah! ces cadavres!" muttered the Frenchmen. Outside were Turkish graves, from which jackals had abstracted the contents.

It was now midday, and the heat of the air, as we took off again, seemed scarcely possible, like the conditions of a dream. Even at five thousand feet it felt as though a stream of flames were playing through the window upon the neck and face. Enormous bumps whirled us up and down, to the visible distress of the other passengers, as the wings dipped from side to side, and the aeroplane fell through space like a stone, or

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leapt towards the heavens with the quiver and thrill of a hunter at a fence. The Persian boy and Butcher frankly collapsed ; the gunner was disturbed ; and even the Frenchmen, experienced fliers, admitted afterwards that it had been "un voyage pénible." We lunched at Rutbah, where the Nairn Transport Company rents a large square fort from the Government of Iraq. Members of the local camel corps, ferocious men with daggers stuck all over them and rifles in their hands, guarded the entrance. Within the courtyard, which was filled with tattered and irrelevant humanity, stood a comfortable and very cool lounge, supplied with weekly papers. The wife of the superintendent brought two tame mongooses to play with the guests. She said that her chief amusements were learning to gallop on a camel and shooting gazelle from a car. I shared a table with the gunner, who, on discovering my first and more exclusive Alma Mater, remarked that he wouldn't have thought it, and proceeded to expatiate on the airs of her offspring out East. I was flattered.

In the afternoon the heat became even greater. It was so unusual, so improbably violent, that I wondered how it was that I or anyone else continued to survive under such conditions. A lake appeared ; and then a muddy ribbon, fringed with palm woods : the Tigris. A haze of dust proclaimed the city of the Arabian Nights. We landed for tea. I asked why, of all invented hats, the Iraqis should have chosen the black Victorian forage-cap for their national head-dress. No one knew.

The Maude Hotel, a ramshackle wooden quadrangle, was prepared for our reception. I retired to my room in the interests of the *Express* and wrote : "The heat is like a joke ; the paper shrivels as I type ; the glass from which I drink, though filled with iced ginger-beer, emits a sharp warmth." Attached to my room was a wooden bathroom, which I thought held the seed of

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But the water, having trickled through half a  
of pipe-line under the desert, was steaming hot,  
even after it was poured out took seven hours to  
me only gently warm.

inner we ate in the garden, a spacious enclosure of  
palms, whose bunches of fruit hung ripening below  
r leaves. Further down electric lights protruded  
n their trunks. The food was excellent, consisting  
ish from the Tigris, roast duck, and an exquisite  
ond-ice tasting of cyanide of potassium. "This  
el has always good food," said the waiter, with that  
stocratic intonation peculiar to Arabs. "You shall  
other gentlemen."

As Butcher and I ate, a sound of singing spoke a  
nantic Oriental message out of the night. Our atten-  
n, however, was diverted from its tragic cadences to  
: idiosyncrasies of our companion, an American,  
ose name, if the reader will be so kind as to believe  
was Boggins. He was suffering from an accretion  
phlegm, and was engaged in fertilising a cactus hedge  
ar by. "I've spent the greater patt of the lasst few  
arrs in South Amurrica," he informed us. "But my  
mpany wantted me to come out here"—spit . . .  
lash—"so I guess I came"—snort; spit . . . splash,  
it . . . splash. "I believe Crosse and Blackman's  
re yewerr leading manufacturers of canned goods, are  
ney naht?"

"Crosse and Blackwell is the name."

"Well, whether it's Blackwell or Blackman, I guess  
hey're the ones I've heard of,"—spit-spit-spit, spit!!  
. . . splash.

The birds in the trees above twittered on, protesting.

At this juncture, like the first whiffs of a gas attack,  
the fact that Iraq was officially within the sphere of  
Anglo-India was announced by two compatriots, who  
came to join us. "Give the sahib a whisky," said one  
to the waiter. So I *was* a sahib, curious though it

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seemed. "What did you think of Alex.?" \* said the other. "My memsahib's there at the moment." This remark was calculated to inform me that, being married, he was not perhaps the guide to pleasure that I expected. Undeterred, I replied that I wished to see the town. Even though it was dark, my desire was surely natural. Bagdad, like Athens and Rome, is one of childhood's cities. "What on earth for?" came the reply. "There's nothing in it but a lot of bloody wogs." None the less I persisted, and stood myself on the Maude bridge-of-boats. Across the huge river came the strains of an Orientalised tango and the reflection of café lights. Every variety of Arab filed before me—fat and thin, draped and trousered, running madly, pensively singing, Bedouins in 1880 moustaches, the more sophisticated in those of Charlie Chaplin, some women veiled, others (particularly those of substantial bust) in the scantiest of cotton frocks, and children tottering beneath fezes larger than themselves. The streets were filled with dashing horse-cabs.

The party meanwhile had gone to the *Arabian Nights*, a gloomy outdoor night-club, furnished with a proscenium at one end. At the other tables sat Arab gigolos in Palm Beach suitings, Bedouins in those gorgeous trappings which the features of Colonel T. E. Lawrence have rendered depressingly familiar, and a few Englishmen aglow with righteous indiscretion. Tarts in tulle and spangles sat avidly in the background, while our group discussed their pasts and those of every other white woman between the Mediterranean and the Arabian Sea for the last ten years. "That one, as a matter of fact, really used to haave a *very* naice little body. . . . You see the woman with the drum; a bit fat, what? When she came out with the Army of Occupation she was a damn useful bit o' work. Then they tried to send her away, and she married a wog

\* Alexandria.

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and took his nationality, and here she is for good and all, serve her right. . . . Soocially, Bagdad's all raight, I can tell you. The clubs are absolutely delaightful . . . of course no one but Britishers. There's hunting and poeloe, horses to be had cheap, and all sorts of racing. . . . What are the new shoews in town now ? ”

By this time it was nearly midnight, and as the “shoew ” here had not yet begun, I walked back to bed, observing on the way that the distant melancholies which Mr. Boggins had so forcibly eliminated during dinner, had in reality proceeded from the mouths, not of wistful houris, but of large pink gramophone horns. I bathed in the now cooling water. But sleep was banished by the piercing wails of what I could only suppose to be a hyaena in travail on the floor beneath. Stumbling into the courtyard, and out into the street, my pyjamaed figure conjured the porter from the gutter, and he silenced the animal, bringing me a large bottle of beer besides. It was now one o'clock and I slept. At ten minutes past two, I was awakened. After a meal of fried eggs, we drove out to the aerodrome, and took off, in complete darkness, at ten minutes to four. It must be explained that, according to schedule, we ought to have reached Basra the evening before. But owing to the delay at Gaza, and the possibility of water in one of the tanks, Alcock had thought it advisable to stop in Bagdad, and make this early start instead.

On land, it was comparatively cool. But “hot air rises.” And as we rose also, the darkness became a suffocating inferno. Fortunately the pilot received a wireless message to the effect that a following wind was to be found at an even greater altitude, and was thus able both to increase his speed from 90 to 120 miles an hour, and to relieve our discomfort. The arch of Chosroes at Ctesiphon was concealed from us. And though, by the time we reached Ur, the sun had risen,



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it failed to reveal the home of Abraham. At Basra, the home of Sinbad, we landed to exchange pilots and toy with a second breakfast at the British Air Force base. Already the sun was sending out a pale, searing heat. Passing over a group of oil refineries and tanks that resembled a village of small gasometers, we came to the head of the Persian Gulf, and reached Bushire, on the north side, about half-past ten, to find a third breakfast awaiting us, this time of fish. We were now in Persia. A soldier uniformed like the Shah stood by the machine. Customs officials, to show their importance, rummaged through every cranny of our luggage. A horde of seminaked men, brown and black, proceeded with the process of refuelling, mounting by ladders to the upper wing, and there connecting the tanks with the Anglo-Persian Oil Company's wheeled container by means of long hoses. The aerodrome was blistering. As we prepared to leave, the resident engineer begged the pilot to obtain from Karachi a watering-can with a rose, as he had some seedlings for whose health a fine spray was essential. Astonished at the incongruity of man and his environment, we were off again, flying at 5000 feet along the side of a yet higher range of mountains. The shores of the Gulf presented a desolate and purgatorial appearance on this blazing August morning, lacking entirely the sharp blues and golden cliffs of the Mediterranean. Land and water had been sucked of their colour by the sun, and displayed only a malignant pallor.

During the journey, we ate sardine sandwiches, crumbling with heat, and drank lime-juice and water from an earthen pot, which had kept it surprisingly cold. The next stop was Lingeh, where refuelling was again necessary. Here the heat became a white delirium, dancing over the arid, pebbly dust, hurting the eyes and weakening the breath. A few palms and a group of women stood in silhouette, as upon a snow-field. A

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cluster of bee-hive domes in the background sheltered a group of wells.

Crossing over to the southern shore of the Gulf of Oman, we were now above the forbidding peaks of Musandam, a huge menacing complex of whittled humps, grey-black against the baleful yellow sunset, and cleft by two titanic fiords, in whose bottoms the water gleamed a pale silver. This extraordinary formation is one of the oldest pieces of the world ; it stood before the Himalayas. Alexander's admiral, Nearchus, saw it, but declined to visit it. Pliny knew of it. Even now it is inhabited by a race known as the Shihuh, whose language is unintelligible to other Arabs.

We were above the sea again, when the sun, whose intensity had been steadily increasing since we left Genoa six days ago, was suddenly concealed. The atmosphere became sticky. It was the Indian monsoon, stretching out to meet us. Crossing a lagoon, we circled over Jask, and landed for the night, having flown 1070 miles that day. At the aerodrome, a strange figure, with the bearded face of a sheikh, but wearing linen plus-fours, greeted us. This was Dr. Williamson, a professing Moslem, and known as Hadji Williamson, since he had made the pilgrimage to Mecca. A Ford lorry was waiting for us, a recent innovation, which the inhabitants, accustomed enough to aeroplanes, regarded as the devil. This took us to the house of the Indo-European Telegraph Superintendent, a resident of thirty years in one of the hottest places in the world, whose employers had never troubled to provide him with a means of making ice, though there was a large electric power-house almost in his garden. He was not the first Englishman in Jask. Sir Thomas Herbert, visiting the place in the early seventeenth century, wrote the following epitaph :— \*

\* Communicated by Sir Arnold Wilson.

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“ Here lies buried one Captain Shilling  
unfortunately slaine by the insulting  
Portugall : but that his bones want  
sence and expression, they would tell  
you the earth is not worthy his recep-  
tion, and that the people are blockish,  
rude, treacherous and indomitable ”

Atwood, the pilot, and I had thought to bathe. But as it was now dark, and sharks had lately become as plentiful as shrimps in two feet of water, even leaping out to nip people's legs as they walked along the beach, we thought better of it. The heat was most oppressive, enveloping the body in a clammy film. After a dinner of stuffed crabs, we went to bed beneath a rush awning on the roof, where a cool wind got up and gave us a full night's sleep.

The following morning we took off at six o'clock, and continued along the inhospitable coast till the Persian boundary was passed and we were over Baluchistan. Range after range of mountains, ramparts of drought and desolation, stretched into the hazy distance, pallid and oppressive. As we passed over a ravine, a sudden bump sent Butcher and myself leaping from our seats almost to the roof of the cabin. At midday we came to Gwadar, where a single tent, a stack of petrol tins, and a pot of tea, were pitched in absurd isolation on a plain of white dust. Not a house nor a habitation was in sight, and the Imperial Airways' agent, a voluble Indian, had taken the whole morning mounted on a camel to reach the landing-place and prepare for our reception. It was exactly a week since we had left London, and we thought of our first lunch at Le Bourget, as we drank the tea. Then we re-embarked for India, flying through a bank of cool cloud. A new coast appeared, arid, but less forbidding. Ten minutes more, said the mechanic. The vision of an American city in the Middle West

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expanded beneath us. We landed some eight miles the other side of it, ten minutes ahead of the scheduled time.

A number of dark-faced gentlemen in white leg-draperies, black smoking-caps and umbrellas, surrounded the aeroplane. An English customs officer begged me to inform him if I had brought any gramophones, bicycles, or pianos, and if not, whether I was engaged in gun-running. Some friends of a friend met me with their motor, and pointed my attention to the new airship hangar, the largest single-storey building in the world, and constructed entirely of corrugated iron. "The number of men," they remarked with relish, "killed in the process was enormous." This observation I subsequently published in the *Calcutta Statesman*, to the great indignation of the Karachi Press, who harped on "Author's Callous Remark" for several weeks. The casualties, it was pointed out, had actually been extremely few. Having inspected the internal height from which the bodies had fallen, we set off for the town.

This, I said to myself, suddenly remembering, is India; and looked out from beneath the hood. Beneath a depressing, overcast sky stretched an asphalt road, black and efficient, whose objectives were conveniently labelled on a white English signpost in black letters. Occasionally a bungalow stood up, carefully shrouded in a front garden. Otherwise the earth lay bare, a dead mauvish brown, sprouting tenuous bushes of cactus growth or small fig-like shrubs with mauve flowers that fluttered in the wind. In the background ran a low railway embankment, interrupted by a horizontal bridge. Above this appeared the distant towers of the English church of the Holy Trinity, the Scottish Denominational church of St. Andrew, and the Gothic lecture-hall, all executed in yellow stone. This placid scene was enlivened by a lady in a yellow sari and a gentleman in white draperies on a bicycle, going one way, and a

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string of camels, evidently afraid of the asphalt, coming the other.

It transpired that my welcomers, without whose kindness I should now have been in tears, had made me an honorary member of the Sind Club, a palace of comfort, good food, and eternal drinks, set in a compound of flowering trees, where I found myself in possession of a suite of three rooms and the usual offices. An inscrutable brown wizard with a white moustache was also at my disposal. "To-night, of course," they said, "you'll only want a dinner-jacket." Ruefully I apologised for the loathsome contingencies of air travel, explaining that limitations of weight had prevented the inclusion of evening clothes in my luggage. By day I might have arrived wearing a grass loin-cloth, for all anyone would have cared. But the Indian night holds no place for the un-dressed. The dilemma was solved by my agreeing to dine alone in my room. This I did, assailed by the sensations of a first day at school, and experiencing that singular feature of Indian life, the difficulty of ever lighting a cigarette owing to the unceasing fans. Outside, a military band was playing composite tunes for the entertainment of a "front-line" dinner. To-morrow was August the Fourth ; but that being a Sunday, the dinner was to-night.

I awoke next morning to a whistle of wind that would have alarmed Macbeth's witches, on which were borne the noises of the parrot-house at the zoo : the monsoon and the local birds. Timidly I ventured to breakfast. Nothing could have exceeded the friendliness of the members ; my diffidence began to disappear. But the pall of my absent clothes hung over me, and I was motored into the town to a Mussulman tailor, who that evening delivered in my room a white suit with pearl buttons. The appropriate shoes were supplied, with no less expedition, by a military bootmaker named Mohonjee Nagjee.

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The week's flight, though I was unconscious of it at the time, had left me exhausted. And in the interval between my arrival on Saturday afternoon, and the departure of the boat for Bombay on the following Thursday, I was content to do little. Various incidents enlivened the days. There was the shock of discovering that *chota hasri*, which I had always believed to be a form of suicide, in fact denoted early morning tea. The men with whom I consorted embarrassed me by asking what I thought of them and their fellows. To which I replied, evasively, that I noticed a sort of sadness creeping over those lately arrived. One afternoon we went down to the harbour to bathe. It was a gloomy scene ; heaps of rotting fish lay about our feet, providing food for emaciated dogs ; across the water was a pier laden with goods trucks and cranes. The sky was heavily overcast. As I clung to a rusty buoy, the wretchedness of the world was completed by the unavailing efforts of two Indians to land a cow from a boat with a high curving triangle of sail like an old slave dhow.

But during this time my thoughts were really on the journey I had just completed. I see it now as one of the great experiences of a life, a period of vivid, unclouded enjoyment in its revelation of a huge expanse of the world's surface, of unsuspected and unimagined beauties, of heat and desolation beyond credence, of a new pleasure in physical movement. Of the revelation that was to follow, of India itself, I have written elsewhere. The present excursion describes yet a further revelation. India exists, as an entity conscious and distinct, on account of the Himalayan frontier. I was now about to cross this frontier, and to record, with my own senses, the degree of India's separation from the plateau of Central Asia.

ROBERT BYRON, *First Russia, Then Tibet* (1933)

## NOTES

### *Tramping in America*

William Henry Davies (1871-1940) was born at Newport, Monmouthshire, at a public-house kept by his grandparents. After appearing in the Juvenile Court as the leader of a street gang of whom the local shopkeepers stood in terror, he was apprenticed to a picture-frame maker. Of a roving disposition and possessed of a desire for travel and adventure, he worked his way on a ship to America and there became a tramp. For some years he wandered through parts of the United States, Canada, and England. The story of these wanderings is told in "The Autobiography of a Super-Tramp" (1908), to which Bernard Shaw wrote a preface. Davies afterwards published a continuation of his life-story in "Later Days" (1925) and "The Adventures of Johnny Walker, Tramp" (1926), but neither of these has the freshness, naturalness, and spontaneity of his first book. On his travels he had been writing occasional verses, and in 1905, at the age of thirty-four, he published his first volume of poetry. A number of other volumes followed, and his "Collected Poems" appeared in 1940. In recognition of his contribution to letters the University of Wales conferred upon him the Honorary Degree of Doctor of Literature. "The Autobiography of a Super-Tramp" is a remarkable work that has gone into many editions. It is characterised by a naturalness, breadth of sympathy, and total absence of sensationalism or the melodramatic.

- P. 1, l. 15. *Saloon* : the word used in America for a public-house.
- P. 2, l. 1. *My Liverpool acquaintance* : Davies had set sail for America from Liverpool, where he had made the acquaintance of a man who had emigrated to America some years previously, had come back to England because there had been a slump in America and he had fallen on bad times, and was now going back to the United States to make a fresh start.
- P. 4, l. 3. *A tarantula* : a large, poisonous spider.
- l. 13. *The brakesman* : the guard on an American train.
- P. 10, l. 9. *Long Island Sound* : a fashionable seaside resort off New York to which many of the more wealthy Americans

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go in the summer months when the neighbouring city gets too hot and sultry.

### *To the West Riding*

John Boynton Priestley (b. 1894), novelist, playwright, and broadcaster, as well as the author of several critical works on English literature, is probably one of the best known of contemporary writers. A native of Bradford, he has always remained a Yorkshireman in outlook and interests, and has the typical Northerner's affection for and faith in the average man. By some critics he has been styled the modern Dickens. He was educated at Bradford Grammar School and Trinity Hall, Cambridge, and served in the Great War of 1914-1918, first with the Duke of Wellington's and then with the Devonshire Regiment. His chief novels are "The Good Companions" (1929), "Angel Pavement" (1930), and "They Walk in the City" (1936). His most popular play is probably "Laburnum Grove" (1933), though more important from many points of view are his three "time" plays, "Time and the Conways" (1937), "I Have Been Here Before" (1937), and "Johnson Over Jordan" (1939). "English Journey" is the record of a tour by car through the north of England.

- P. 15, l. 1. *The route I had originally planned*: He had come from Leicester to Nottingham and intended going on to Staffordshire and the Potteries.
- l. 3. *Kitchener's Army battalion*: In the early years of the Great War of 1914-1918 Lord Kitchener raised a volunteer army for service in France. Priestley was in it.
- P. 17, l. 14. *Its famous crooked spire*: The spire of the parish church of Chesterfield (Derbyshire) is twisted owing to the warping of the wooden beams inside.
- l. 25. *Old Breughel's enchanting pictures*: Jan Breughel, more correctly Brueghel (1568-1625), Flemish painter of flowers, fruit, and rustic scenes, usually called "Old Breughel" to distinguish him from his son of the same name, who was also a painter.
- P. 18, l. 18. *Cousin Silence*: an amusing and somewhat incompetent country justice in Shakespeare's "King Henry IV," Part II.

*My Uncle Toby*: the eccentric Captain Shandy, uncle of the hero of Laurence Sterne's novel "Tristram Shandy" (1760).

- l. 19. *Mr. Micawber*: the feckless but super-optimistic character in Dickens's "David Copperfield." He was



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perpetually in debt but always lived in hope that something would turn up.

- l. 26. *Slag-heaps* : conical-shaped colliery tips, or refuse heaps, to be seen in the coal-mining districts.
- l. 32. *Mountainous Nevada* : a barren, mountainous district in South Spain in the region of Granada.
- P. 19, l. 3. *Chiaroscuro* : the use of strong light-and-shade contrasts, either in pictorial art or in literature. The word is Italian, meaning literally "clear-dark."
- l. 33. *The bright fields of asphodel . . . Elysium* : Elysium was the place where, according to Greek mythology, the souls of the departed enjoyed eternal bliss. Its fields were supposed to be thick with asphodel, a species of lily something resembling the daffodil. Cf. Tennyson, "The Lotos-Eaters,"  
     ". . . Others in Elysian valleys dwell,  
     Resting weary limbs at last on beds of asphodel."
- P. 20, l. 1. *A vast aerial flight of coal trucks* : trucks, or "tubs" carrying coal or slag on an overhead cable from the pithead to the tip. The trucks are suspended from the cable and follow each other at intervals of a few yards.
- l. 27. *The silence that is in the starry sky*, etc. : Quoted from Wordsworth's "Song at the Feast of Brougham Castle."
- P. 23, l. 5. *Tops and noils* : technical terms in the woollen industry. "Tops" are the bundles of combed wool prepared for spinning ; "noils" are the short pieces and knots combed out of the long staple.
- P. 24, l. 14. *The medieval Wakefield nativity play* : one of the four complete cycles of medieval mystery plays still preserved belongs to the town of Wakefield in the West Riding of Yorkshire. The best known of the plays in it is one dealing with the Nativity, in which the comic episode of Mak the sheep-stealer is introduced. Several villages in the vicinity lay claim to having been the original scene of this episode, but probably the attribution is in every case apocryphal.
- l. 15. *Wuthering Heights* : the district of Yorkshire near Haworth, immortalised by Emily Brontë in her novel of this name (1847).
- l. 17. *John Ball* : Leader of the Peasants' Revolt of 1381. His condemnation of the oppression of the poor by the rich was voiced in the lines, attributed to him,  
     " When Adam delved and Eve span,  
     Who was then the gentleman ? "
- P. 25, l. 19. *A famous composer, two renowned painters, and a well-*

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- known poet* : The composer was Delius, born at Bradford, of German parents, in 1862, the two painters Sir William Rothenstein (b. Bradford 1872, educated Bradford Grammar School) and his brother, Albert Rutherston (b. 1881). The poet is named in the next sentence.
- l. 20. *Humbert Wolfe* : Humbert Wolfe (1885-1940), modern poet, critic, and essayist, like Priestley, was a native of Bradford and was educated at Bradford Grammar School. He gives an account of his early life in his autobiographical volume "The Upward Anguish."
- P. 26, l. 14. *Mazzini* : Giuseppe Mazzini (1805-1872), Italian patriot and political writer, who, with Garibaldi and Cavour, effected the Unification of Italy under the House of Savoy. Exiled by the Austrian government for his activities, he came to London in 1837.
- l. 15. *Marx* : Karl Marx (1818-1883), German Socialist leader and author of the work "Das Kapital." Expelled successively from Prussia and France, he finally took up his residence in London and wrote the bulk of his famous work in the Reading Room of the British Museum.
- Lenin* : Vladimir Lenin (1870-1924), Russian revolutionary leader and founder of the U.S.S.R. Like Mazzini and Karl Marx, when he was exiled from his own country, under the Czarist régime, for his political activities, he found asylum in England.
- P. 27, l. 2. *The great slump* : the period of the trade depression in the late twenties and early thirties of the present century, when there was mass unemployment in the industrial towns and many businesses failed.
- P. 28, l. 3. *The curse of Adam* : the necessity to work for a living.
- l. 7. *Latakia* : a brand of Turkish tobacco.
- P. 30, l. 21. *The men who were boys when I was a boy*, etc. : Quoted from the concluding stanza of Hilaire Belloc's poem "The South Country" :  
 "I will hold my house in the high wood,  
 Within a walk of the sea,  
 And the men that were boys when I was a boy  
 Shall sit and drink with me."
- l. 36. *I have had playmates*, etc. : Quoted from the opening of Charles Lamb's poem "The Old Familiar Faces" :  
 "I have had playmates, I have had companions  
 In my days of childhood, in my joyful schooldays ;  
 All, all are gone, the old familiar faces."
- P. 32, l. 8. *Who shall restore to them the years that the locust hath*

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*eaten?* : See Joel ii. 25-26—"And I will restore to you the years that the locust hath eaten, the cankerworm, and the caterpillar, and the palmerworm, my great army which I sent among you. And ye shall eat in plenty, and be satisfied, and praise the name of the Lord your God, that hath dealt wondrously with you : and my people shall never be ashamed."

### *The Last Fling*

Peter Fleming (*b.* 1907) is at present a major in the Grenadier Guards. In the early part of the war he served in Norway and Greece, where he was wounded. Educated at Eton and afterwards at Christ Church, Oxford, he took up journalism as a career and became a special correspondent of "The Times," in which capacity he travelled to many parts of the world. In 1931 he joined an expedition which set out to explore the Rio dos Mortes (the River of the Dead), in the course of which journey he covered almost three thousand miles. The story of it is told in his book "Brazilian Adventure" (1933), from which the present extract is taken. Since then he has also published two other books, "One's Company" (1934) and "News from Tartary" (1936). Fleming has a *flair* for quick-moving narrative, full of surprises, excitement, and the spice of adventure. He can make the reader feel with him and share his mental and emotional reactions to his experiences, while a subtle sense of humour pervades all that he writes. "Brazilian Adventure" has been called the outstanding example of a type of modern travel book which is at once personal, self-conscious (perhaps a little too self-conscious), and yet characterised by restraint and under-statement.

- P. 36, l. 29. *We changed once more our plan of operations* : For the previous few miles they had been alternately wading in the root-choked river and walking on the dry land.
- P. 37, l. 1. *Roger* : an art student who had been a friend of the author's at Eton and Oxford and who had joined the expedition.
- l. 21. *Queiroz* : a young Brazilian of twenty-two whom they had taken into the party as a guide and servant. "He was a very small and unattractive man," writes the author, "with hardly any neck at all, and a face like a malicious hedgehog. He had only one eye, but his powers of endurance were considerable."
- P. 40, l. 9. *Stout Cortez* : Hernando Cortez (1485-1547 Spanish soldier, explorer, and conqueror of Mexico. The

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seems to be a reminiscence here of Keats's sonnet "On First Looking into Chapman's Homer":

"Then felt I like some watcher of the skies  
When a new planet swims into his ken;  
Or like stout Cortez, when with eagle eyes  
He stared at the Pacific—and all his men  
Looked at each other with a wild surmise—  
Silent, upon a peak in Darien."

Perhaps there is a further echo of these lines in "the eagle-eye business" of the previous page (line 7).

- P. 41, l. 34. *The Angels of Mons*: At the time of the battle of Mons in 1914 it was said that angels were seen by some of the British soldiers over the battlefield. For some time the story was believed (there are even a few people who continue to believe it to-day), but all inquiry and investigation has failed to find any reliable evidence. It may have been an hallucination, the product of imagination, or more probably just a baseless rumour which was eagerly believed by rather credulous people precisely because it was incredible.
- P. 50, l. 14. *Rapadura*: a coarse kind of sugar, usually in large cakes or lumps, a product of various South American states.
- l. 20. *Farinha*: the mandioca mentioned below.
- P. 51, l. 6. *Mandioca*: a Brazilian plant from which arrow-root is produced.
- l. 23. *The place where Fawcett met his death*: In 1925 Colonel P. H. Fawcett, accompanied by his son and another Englishman named Raleigh Rimell, went to explore the Central Brazilian Plateau, but was never heard of again. Several expeditions were sent out to find him but were unsuccessful. It is supposed that the party either lost itself and perished from hunger or disease, or that they were murdered by hostile tribesmen.

### *Venice*

Louis Untermeyer is one of the best known of modern American writers. Born in New York in 1885, he was trained as a jeweller in the business for which his family's name had long been famous, but in 1923 he left the business world to devote himself to letters, in which he had long been interested. He has held lectureships in several American Universities, has written novels, poetry, plays, travel books, and books of literary criticism, has edited several anthologies, and contributed articles to a number

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of magazines. "The Donkey of God," which tells of his travels in Italy, takes its title from a story suggested to the author by the town of Assisi, the home of St. Francis. The donkey in question was, of course, the one that bore Jesus on his entry into Jerusalem. Italy, declares Untermeyer, is a land of "sermons in stone." Most of the stories and anecdotes in the book (and there are a good many of them) are his own, though they were suggested to him by the atmosphere and the architectural features of the buildings in the various places that the writer visited.

- P. 53, l. 3. *Venice, like Venus, rose from the water* : Venus (or rather her Greek counterpart, Aphrodite) was supposed to have sprung from the foam of the sea.
- l. 30. *Caruso* : Enrico Caruso (1873-1921), famous Italian operatic tenor.
- l. 31. *Verdi* : Giuseppe Verdi (1813-1901), the Italian operatic composer. His operas include "Rigoletto," "Aida," and "Falstaff."
- P. 54, l. 17. *The Piazza of St. Mark* : a famous square in the centre of Venice. The basilica of St. Mark is reputed to be one of the three finest in Italy.
- l. 34. *Petrarch* : famous Italian poet (1304-1374), originator of the sonnet. In his later life he lived in Venice and died at Arquia, a few miles out of the city.
- P. 55, l. 3. *Saint Theodore* : one of the most famous monks of the Byzantine Church. In his monastery he fostered learning and the fine arts. He was zealous for the worship of holy images.
- l. 6. *Doges* : the supreme magistrates of Venice.
- P. 56, l. 33. *There is a time for everything*, etc. : A quotation from the Book of Ecclesiastes iii. 4.
- P. 58, l. 22. *Attila* : King of the Huns, who laid waste much of Europe, including Northern Italy, in the middle of the fifth century A.D.
- P. 59, l. 11. *Pala d'oro* : the retable of the High Altar. Literally the expression means "the golden pale."
- l. 32. *Tintoretto* : Italian painter, 1517-1594 ; the last great figure of the Venetian school.
- Palma Giovane* : the younger Palma, i.e. Jacopo Palma (1544-1628), Venetian painter, as distinguished from his great-uncle of the same name (1480-1528).
- Paolo Veronese* : Venetian painter of processional, ceremonial, and festival pictures (1528-1588).
- l. 37. *The Great Council* : the governing body of Venice, consisting of members of the nobility.

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- P. 60, l. 1. *The all-powerful Ten* : an Executive Committee of the Grand Council, established in the fourteenth century. The Council of Ten wielded great power and was in fact the real governing body of the city.
- l. 2. *Hold the gorgeous East in fee* : Quoted from the opening line of Wordsworth's sonnet "On the Extinction of the Venetian Republic,"
- "Once did she hold the gorgeous East in fee,  
And was the safeguard of the West. . . ."
- l. 5. *Bellinis and Titians* : Vincenzo Bellini (1802-1835), operatic composer, and Titian (1477-1576), the greatest painter of the Venetian school.
- l. 8. *A ghetto* : quarter of a town specially set aside for Jews.
- l. 10. *Herr Baedeker* : Karl Baedeker, the German publisher, who in 1839 inaugurated the issue of a series of guide-books to the chief European countries. They have been continued ever since.
- l. 27. *Desdemona* : the heroine of Shakespeare's tragedy "Othello."
- l. 32. *Ruskin* : John Ruskin (1819-1900), the famous Victorian art critic and political economist. The opinion quoted is from "The Stones of Venice" (1851-1853).
- P. 61, l. 20. *Byzantine* : Byzantine architecture is that prevalent in the Eastern Empire down to the fall of Constantinople in 1453. Its distinguishing features were rounded arches and mosaic work.
- l. 21. *St. Anthony* : saint of the Roman Catholic Church (1195-1231). He was not born in Padua but in Lisbon. He is called St. Anthony of Padua because the monument to him is in St. Anthony's Church there. As St. Francis preached to the birds, so St. Anthony is reputed to have preached to the fishes.
- l. 22. *Giotto* : the Italian painter and architect (1276-1337). His paintings adorn many of the most famous churches in Italy.
- ll. 24-26. *The four bronze horses . . . the pagan arch of Nero* : The Church of St. Mark was originally the private chapel of the Doge, and in the course of years successive rulers decorated it with spoils taken from various other buildings and monuments in Italy. The bronze horses were placed there by the Doge Enrico Dandolo in 1204. Originally they had been on the Arch of Nero, though this had disappeared long before Dandolo's time. It was erected in Rome by the Emperor Nero between A.D. 58 and 62 to

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commemorate his victories over the Parthians. It stood on the Capitoline Hills but was probably destroyed soon after his death.

### *The Nomads' Road to Kabul*

Joan Rosita Forbes (*née* Torr), known usually as Rosita Forbes, is a native of Lincolnshire. During the War of 1914-1918 she drove an ambulance in France and since then has made a name for herself as traveller, lecturer, and author. One of her most famous and most spectacular journeys was with a cinema expedition through Abyssinia in the years 1924-1925. The value of her work has been recognised in many quarters and she is a Fellow or Member of a number of Geographical Societies. Besides "*Forbidden Road*," from which the present extract is taken, her travel books include "*From Red Sea to Blue Nile*" (1925), "*Sirocco*" (1927), and "*Eight Republics in Search of a Future*" (1933). Of recent years she has retired to the Bahamas to live. Her writing is of the impressionist type, quick-moving, full of incident, characterised by short sentences, with a liberal sprinkling of dialogue. Perhaps her technique owes something to that of the films.

- P. 62, l. 5. *Serai* : an Eastern inn for the accommodation of travellers and beasts ; a caravanseraï.
- l. 17. *Pushtins* : the thick leather coats mentioned in the next sentence.
- P. 63, l. 23. *Bucephalus* : the fleet and handsome charger of Alexander the Great.
- l. 29. *An Afridi* : a native of Afghanistan, or rather of one of the tribes of that country.
- P. 64, l. 12. *The third Afghan War* : The author probably means what is usually called the Second Afghan War (1879-1880), famous for the march of Lord Roberts and his men from Kabul to Kandahar.
- P. 67, l. 18. *The last rebel, Bacha i Sagan* : the leader of an army of bandits who attacked Kabul and drove out King Amanullah and his family in December 1928.
- l. 21. *Osbert Sitwell* : See note on pages 205-206.
- l. 32. *Alexander, Genghis Khan, and Akbar* : The references are respectively to (i) Alexander the Great, (ii) Genghis, the Mogul conqueror (1162-1227), who invaded and subdued Khiva, Samarkand, and Bokhara during the years 1218-1224, and (iii) Mohammed Akbar (1542-1605), the greatest of the Mogul Emperors, who conquered Hindustan.

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P. 69, l. 8. *Cimmerian hue* : The Cimmerians were a mythical people mentioned by Homer who dwelt in perpetual mists and darkness. Hence the phrase means "pitch darkness."

l. 23. *Pushtu* : the native language of Afghanistan.

l. 30. *Tonga* : a light, two-wheeled Eastern carriage.

P. 70, l. 34. *Mullah* : a learned man, more especially one learned in the Koran and the Mohammedan faith ; hence the reference to the beard.

P. 72, l. 8. *The Olympian Thomas Cook* : the travel agency of Thomas Cook & Sons. Mount Olympus was the home of the gods, hence the adjective "Olympian" implies that to the traveller Thomas Cook is a god who always looks after him, supplies all his wants, and gets him out of all his difficulties.

l. 30. *The P.M.* : the Prime Minister.

### *High Days and Holidays in the Soviet Union*

Peter Francis was a young Oxford graduate who, in 1937, at the age of twenty-two, obtained a worker's visa (one of the last to be issued) and went to Russia to work as an engineer in the small town of Orekhovo, sixty miles from Moscow. His sole qualifications for the job, he tells us, were "a Public School education, some office and selling experience, and a colloquial knowledge of French, German, and Spanish." He stayed in the country a little under a year, living amongst the workers and their families. He went, as he confesses, "out of vulgar curiosity," and his book was "the fruit of living, working, and playing with a section . . . of Russian industrial workers." It is remarkable for its frankness and impartiality at a time when most books about Russia were strongly tinged by political prejudice.

P. 75, l. 5. *The October Revolution* : the Bolshevik Revolution of October 1917 which overthrew the Czarist régime.

l. 7. *The New Constitution* : adopted December 5, 1936. It was far from being democratic, but it gave the people certain rights and powers which they had never enjoyed before.

l. 28. *Dubrovka* : a small village three or four miles out of Orekhovo ; not to be confused with Dubovka, near Stalingrad.

l. 29. *Harry* : Harry Lawrence, another Englishman he had met who was working as a fitter in his factory.

P. 76, l. 32. *Superstition has been abolished in the Soviet Union* :



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In some parts of England the sight of a magpie is supposed to be unlucky.

- P. 78, l. 6. *Vodka*: a strong, spirituous drink, highly intoxicating, consumed in large quantities by the Russians.
- l. 25. *Karbolit*: the name of the engineering works at which the writer was employed.
- P. 79, l. 22. *St. Petersburg*: the old Czarist name for Leningrad.
- P. 81, l. 5. *Ivan the Terrible*: the Czar Ivan IV (1530-1584), called "the Terrible" because of his ungovernable temper and his cruel and harsh treatment of those who incurred his disfavour.
- P. 82, l. 24. *Adler*: a member of the editorial staff of the "Moscow Daily News," with whom the author had become friendly.
- P. 83, l. 14. *Three roubles*: The rouble at that time was worth about twopence-halfpenny.
- P. 84, l. 3. *Metro*: the Moscow Underground Railway or Tube.
- l. 8. *Thirty kopecks*: a little less than a penny. See note to P. 87, l. 11, below.
- l. 19. *The special Pushkin Centenary Exhibition*: Alexander Pushkin (1799-1837), Russian revolutionary writer and poet. On the centenary of his death, in 1937, an exhibition dealing with his life and works was held in Moscow.
- l. 26. *Gorky*: Maxim Gorky (1869-1936), Russian dramatist and story-writer. He was one of the most honoured of the older generation of Bolshevik writers and a close friend of both Lenin and Trotsky.
- P. 85, l. 2. *A Stakhanovite exhibition*: A Stakhanovite is a workman who has achieved distinction for record output. Stakhanovism was the movement, started in 1934, to try and "step up" production. It derived its name from Stakhanov, a miner, who was said to have hewed 102 tons of coal in a shift of six hours.
- P. 87, l. 11. *Ten kopecks*: a kopeck (or copeck) is one-hundredth part of a rouble. Ten kopecks would be worth about a farthing.
- P. 89, l. 7. *The 1870 Paris Commune*: After the defeat of the French by the Prussians in 1870, and the consequent abdication of Napoleon III, a communist rising took place in Paris. For a time the rebels gained control of the city but were finally crushed by the military forces of the Third Republic.

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P. 90, l. 1. *Marx* : Karl Marx, German Socialist. See note on page 197.

*Engels* : Friedrich Engels (1820-1895), German Socialist and friend and collaborator of Karl Marx.

l. 2. *The defenders of Republican Spain* : During the time that the author was in Russia the Spanish Civil War was in progress between the Republican "Left" Government and various right-wing elements led by General Franco. Volunteers and material help went to the insurgents from Germany and Italy and to the Government (Republican) side from Russia.

l. 3. *Rot Front* : Red Front (German).

l. 35. *Glengarrys* : A glengarry is a close-fitting Scottish cap, worn somewhat on the side of the head and similar in shape to the present R.A.F. cap, but with ribbons hanging down at the back. It received its name from a glen in Inverness. A similar kind of cap formed part of the uniform of the International Brigade in the Spanish Civil War.

P. 92, l. 3. *The Internationale* : the Soviet "National" Anthem. It was discarded at the beginning of 1944 and replaced by the present anthem.

### *Trans-Siberian Express*

For biographical note on the author (Peter Fleming), see page 198.

P. 94, l. 6. *The early days of Oppenheim* : The reference is to the English novelist E. Phillips Oppenheim (b. 1866), many of whose novels are concerned with rather extravagant intrigue, with the Mayfair district of London and Continental expresses as their setting.

P. 95, l. 21. *Abacus* : a kind of sideboard, with various compartments for cups, bottles, glasses, etc.

P. 101, l. 34. *A Trappist's existence* : The Trappists were a branch of the Cistercian Order of monks who lived under a vow of perpetual silence. The name came from the monastery of La Trappe, in Normandy.

P. 105, l. 20. *Our Little Ease* : Little-Ease was the name given to a prison cell or cage so constructed that the prisoner within it could neither stand upright nor lie at full length.

### *Chang and the Chinese*

Osbert Sitwell (Sir Osbert Sitwell since the death of his father in 1943) is one of a famous and gifted literary trio. His sister, Edith Sitwell, has made a very individual contribu-

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tion to modern poetry, while his brother, Sacheverell Sitwell, has distinguished himself in the field of the essay as well as of verse. Born in 1892, Osbert Sitwell was educated at Eton (or as he himself puts it in "Who's Who," during his vacations from Eton), and from 1912 to 1919 was in the Grenadier Guards. Since then he has travelled widely and has devoted himself to literature, the arts, and the care of the family home and estate at Renishaw Park, near Sheffield. His "Collected Poems and Satires" appeared in 1931, a critical work on Dickens in the next year, "Open the Door," a volume of short stories in 1941, and a book of essays, "Sing High, Sing Low," in 1944. He also contributed two penetrating and very original papers on the modern novel to a volume "Trio" (1938), in which Edith and Sacheverell also collaborated.

Much less controversy has centred around the work of Osbert Sitwell than around that of his sister. By outlook and temperament he is an aristocrat in the best sense of that word. To all that he writes he brings a cultivated taste, and his literary style is characterised by grace, dignity, polish, and precision. If at times he is inclined to be cynical it is because he sees through many of the modern shams and shibboleths and realises that much of what passes for democracy is an inverted snobbishness and not far removed from vulgarity. "Escape With Me!" is a record of impressions gained from his travels in China. The title is symbolic. "The book," he writes, "is approached all through from the visual and sensual angles rather from those of knowledge and learning."

- P. 106, l. 3. *The Kan-Yu Hutung*: the street in Pekin where the author was staying. It means "The Alley of Sweet Rain."
- P. 107, l. 26. *The peristeronic art*: the art of training and flying pigeons.
- P. 108, l. 19. *Taoist Priest*: Taoism is an ancient religion of China, founded by Lao-Tze about 694 B.C.
- P. 109, l. 30. *Pharmacopoeia*: system of concocting medicines. *Empirically*: by experiment, or trial and error.
- l. 41. *Robert Fortune*: traveller and botanist (1813-1880). He visited China in 1842 and again in 1848. In 1847 he published a book "A Year's Wanderings in the Northern Provinces of China," and ten years later "A Residence amongst the Chinese," to which the author refers here.
- P. 110, l. 33. *Gardenia radicans*: a semi-tropical shrub which bears beautiful and fragrant flowers.

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1. 34. *Rosa Banksiana*: a species of Australian shrub with flowers like a rose, named after the botanist Sir Joseph Banks.
- P. 112, l. 32. *The Civil Wars*: the war between the forces of North China, collaborating with the Japanese invaders, and those of the Chinese Republic under Chiang Kai-Shek.
- P. 113, l. 11. *Malbrouck s'en va-t-en guerre*: the refrain of a popular eighteenth-century song. The reference is to the famous Duke of Marlborough, the English commander against the French in the War of the Spanish Succession (1704-1713). It is said that he took bribes from the French to betray his side, but then failed to honour his obligation to them.
1. 18. *The Sun-King*: i.e. Louis XIV.
1. 23. *The last war*: i.e. the war of 1914-1917 against Germany and her allies.
- P. 114, l. 7. *Adonis*: according to classical mythology a youth of exceptional beauty.
1. 12. *The same appearance as the late Lord Haldane*: the first Viscount Haldane (created 1911), formerly R. B. H. Haldane. He was Rector of Edinburgh University, 1905-1908, the author of a number of books on philosophy, and later a Cabinet Minister. He died in 1928.
- P. 116, l. 34. *Whole demijohns*: a demijohn is a glass bottle enclosed in a covering of wicker-work.
1. 36. *Acupuncture*: See page 109 (n.), where the process is explained.
- P. 117, l. 16. *The Manchu Dynasty*: the Chinese Imperial family in the seventeenth century, from which Manchuria takes its name.
1. 31. *The way of the Vicar of Bray*: changing sides and loyalties as convenience and expediency dictate. The reference is to the eighteenth-century song in which the cleric in question changes his religious views according to those of the monarch reigning at the time in order that  

"Whatsoever King shall reign,  
I'll still be Vicar of Bray, Sir."
- P. 118, l. 3. *Render unto Caesar*, etc.: See Matthew xxii. 21.
- P. 119, l. 5. *Megalomania*: an insane desire for power; the delusion that one is divinely appointed to rule others.
1. 7. *The unprovoked Japanese assault on China*: The Sino-Japanese war started with a Japanese attack on Manchuria in November 1931.
1. 14. *Wells' "Time Machine"*: H. G. Wells, contemporary

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novelist (*b.* 1866). "The Time Machine" (1895) was one of his earliest novels. It tells how a scientist invents a machine which will take him backwards or forwards in time, and by means of this he precipitates himself into the England of A.D. 2800. He finds that it is inhabited by a decadent and effete aristocracy, called Eloi, who live in the cities and the countryside, and a race of ape-like creatures, known as Morlocks, whose habitation is below ground. The former live in idleness, surrounded by the monuments of a dead culture, while the latter spend their lives in darkness, toiling to supply the necessities and luxuries of their superiors. The Eloi despise the Morlocks and convention forbids them to utter their name in respectable conversation; yet at the same time they stand in fear of them, for periodically some of the Morlocks emerge from their subterranean home, carry off a number of the Eloi, and in cannibal fashion make a feast of their flesh.

The story is, of course, a satire on the trend of the industrialised civilisation of the late nineteenth century, with its intensification of class distinctions and class conflict.

- P. 121, l. 34. *The reign of George III: i.e. 1760-1820.*
- P. 122, ll. 1-3. *In 1840 when China . . . first collided with a great modern industrial power at Hong Kong:* The reference is to the so-called Opium War of 1840-1842. The Chinese Government of the day was making a determined attempt to suppress the opium traffic. Several British subjects, with the connivance of some of the customs officials, were found to be smuggling opium into the country and were dealt with somewhat severely by the Chinese authorities. This "incident" was exploited to the full by the British Government, who had long had its eyes cast upon China as a possible field for trade development, and war was declared. As might have been expected, China suffered defeat and was forced to cede to Britain the port of Hong Kong and to grant her important trading rights and privileges in several other ports.
- l. 4. *Mandarins:* Chinese nobles under the old Imperial régime.
- l. 12. *Lesser breeds without the law:* a quotation from Rudyard Kipling's "Recessional Hymn."
- l. 13. *The Satyricon of Petronius:* Petronius was a companion of the Roman Emperor Nero. The "Satyricon," a comic work full of licentiousness, has usually been attributed to him but it is not certain that he was the author.

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- P. 124, l. 30. *The Emperor Ch'ien Lung* : sometimes spelt K'ien Lung, the greatest of all the Chinese Emperors of the Manchu dynasty, he reigned from 1736 to 1795. The age of Ch'ien Lung is to China what that of Louis XIV is to France.
- P. 126, l. 17. *The Lama Temple* : Lamaism is a corrupt form of Buddhism, found mainly in Tibet. The Lama Temple in Peking, as the author explains in the next paragraph, was originally an Imperial palace.
- l. 34. *The Forbidden City* : the city of Lhasa in Tibet, the residence of the Grand Lama. Europeans are forbidden to enter it.
- P. 127, l. 31. *Lamas* : priests.
- l. 35. *Murrey* : dark red. The word really means "mulberry-coloured."
- P. 128, l. 7. *The Thugs* : a secret religious organisation, murdering stealthily by strangling or poisoning its victims. Attempts were made to suppress it in 1826 but it was not until 1835 that it was finally extirpated.
- P. 129, l. 14. *For a long time it perplexed and evaded me* : In the next chapter of the book Osbert Sitwell tells us that when he did finally succeed in recapturing the identity he realised that the parallel was not with a city he had known but with one he had read of—ancient Rome, in the days of the decay of its Imperial glory.

### *Nazareth*

Llewelyn Powys (1884-1939), brother of two other well-known authors, viz. John Cowper Powys and T. F. Powys, was born at Montacute, Somerset, where his father was Rector. He received his education at Sherborne School and Corpus Christi College, Cambridge. He had a varied life, and the width of experience with which it furnished him is reflected in the diversity of his writings, which cover the fields of travel, philosophy, satire, reminiscences, and reflections on life. During the years 1914 to 1919 he was farming in Kenya ; for the next five years he followed the profession of a journalist in New York ; in 1928 he visited Palestine, in 1930 the West Indies, and in 1937 Switzerland. His best known work is probably "The Pathetic Fallacy" (1930). Despite his early religious upbringing and education, in later life Powys came to adopt an agnostic attitude in matters of faith ; hence the title of "A Pagan's Pilgrimage," a book which stands apart from most accounts of Palestine in that it is not coloured by the sentimentalised

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piety which so frequently tinges books on the Holy Land. Humanist as he was, there was yet something of the mystic about Powys, and though he hesitated to call himself a Christian, he found something strangely moving, fascinating, and beautiful about the figure of Christ as revealed in the Gospels. It is not uninteresting to compare the account of Nazareth printed here with that given by H. V. Morton in his book "In the Steps of the Master."

- P. 129, l. 16. *We were strong enough to leave for Nazareth* : they had been staying for some while at Mount Carmel through Powys and Miss Gregory, one of his party, falling ill of a fever.
- P. 130, l. 14. *That morning when his neighbours had sought to kill him* : See Luke iv. 28-29.
- l. 21. *The good khazzan* : the Cantor in the Jewish synagogue.
- P. 131, l. 6. *The ox knoweth his owner*, etc. : Isaiah i. 3.
- l. 17. *The Pleiades* : a group of stars supposed to have been originally the seven daughters of Atlas, placed in the heavens by Zeus.
- l. 20. *The Hyades* : a group of stars in Taurus. When they rose with the sun they were supposed by the ancients to indicate rain.
- P. 132, l. 23. *The poison of Hellebore* : Hellebore is a poisonous plant which is powdered and used to destroy insects but which seems to be harmless to goats.
- l. 35. *Your old father used to tell us in pulpit* : Powys's father was Rector of Montacute, in Somerset. See above (biographical note).
- P. 133, l. 4. *Odcombe* : a village one mile from Montacute.

### *Leviathan*

Francis Downes Ommaney (b. 1903) was educated at Aldenham Grammar School and the Royal College of Science. For several years he was a Lecturer in Zoology in the University of London, and in 1929 was appointed to the scientific staff of the "Discovery" expedition. His first voyage was in a converted Norwegian ship, the "Antarctic," to the whaling grounds of South Georgia. The story of this expedition was published by him in his book "South Latitude" (1938), from which the extract here given is taken. Besides "South Latitude" he has also written "North Cape" (1939) and a number of scientific works, while the story of his early life is told in his autobiographical volume "The House in the Park" (1944). At the time of its publication "South Latitude" was widely read and discussed. Ommaney writes with all the detailed

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technical knowledge and the interests of a scientist, yet he always avoids becoming academic, and the result is a narrative that is full of verve and interest for the average reader of travel books.

- P. 134, l. 11. *Wheeler* : described by the author in an earlier chapter as "my colleague and superior in the work."
- l. 29. *King George* : i.e. George V.
- P. 135, l. 15. *A whaly B.O.* : the initials stand for "body odour."
- P. 137, l. 31. *The sword of Saladin* : Saladin was the Saracen king and opponent of Richard I. It is said that his scimitar had so keen an edge that when he rested a cushion on it and then drew the sword from beneath, the cushion was cut in two.
- P. 139, l. 27. *Leviathan* : a fabulous sea-monster of immense size mentioned several times in the Old Testament, e.g. Job xli. 1-10, Psalms lxxiv. 14, civ. 26.
- P. 144, l. 16. *Fand!* : a Norwegian oath meaning *Devil!*

### *To the Barrier*

Biographical note on author : see above, page 210. On November 23, 1935, Lincoln Ellsworth, an American airman, took off from Dundee Island, a bare, snow-covered rock at the extreme tip of the peninsula of Graham Land, to fly the uncharted Atlantic wastes to "Little America," the base camp of Admiral Byrd at the extremity of the Ross Sea. The distance was over two thousand miles. For the first eight hours of his flight his radio signals were picked up by Sir Hubert Wilkins on board the "Wyatt Earp," the ship on which his party had come to Graham Land and from which Ellsworth had commenced his flight. After that all communication ceased. Ellsworth was presumed lost and search parties were sent out. The ship "Discovery II," on which Ommaney was an officer, set out for Melbourne to join in the search, equipped with two aeroplanes, a small Moth, and a large American bomber. The extract printed here tells the story of one part of the search. Finally Ellsworth and his companion, Hollick Kenyon, were found. Their petrol supply had given out and they had made a forced landing, living for four weeks in Byrd's snow-covered hut.

- P. 150, ll. 5-6. *Scott, Amundsen, and Shackleton* : all previous explorers of the Antarctic regions.
- l. 37. *Admiral Byrd* : Rear-Admiral Richard E. Byrd,



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Arctic and Antarctic explorer. He made his first flight to the North Pole in 1926 and to the South Pole in 1929. The second Byrd Antarctic expedition took place in the years 1933-1935.

- P. 152, l. 13. *The Wapiti*: the larger of the two aeroplanes, which was to be used in the search.
- P. 158, l. 11. *I had caught several crabs*: To catch a crab (in rowing) means to thrust the oar so deeply into the water that it cannot be got out in time for the next stroke.

### *By Air to Tibet*

Robert Byron lost his life on war service at sea in September 1941. Educated at Eton and at Merton College, Oxford, he became an authority on Byzantine art. He took up journalism, and became known to the reading public for three books of travel: "First Russia, Then Tibet" (1933), "The Road to Oxiana" (1937), and "Imperial Pilgrimage" (1937). He also contributed articles to a number of journals and magazines. In the preface to the first of these works—from which the present extract is taken—he confesses that he travelled "in search of both instruction and improvement." In an age when Western standards and values were challenged, he set out to discover whether there existed anywhere else others more able to guide the world; and he chose Russia and Tibet because of the sharp contrasts between them. "In Russia," he writes, "the moral influence of the Industrial Revolution has found its grim apotheosis; Tibet is the only country on earth where that influence is yet unknown, where even the cart is forbidden to traverse plains flatter than Daytona Beach, and the Dalai Lama himself rides in a man-borne palauquin. Prior to the Industrial Revolution each country had evolved a unique tradition of civilisation. In Russia the tradition has succumbed completely to the virus of the machine. In Tibet it has remained completely immune from it. Among nations which enjoy such traditions the two countries represent the extremes of political, social, and mental difference from the accepted mean. These extremes are confirmed even by their appearance. Russia is lower and more colourless, Tibet higher and more coloured, than any country on the earth. Such confirmation is more than a coincidence. It is an explanation."

Robert Byron's narrative is essentially personal and quick-moving; so much so as to be almost impressionist in character. He has an eye for the significant features

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- of a landscape or a situation, is possessed of a dry humour, and knows how to employ innuendo to good effect.
- . 162, l. 7. *The survivors of the Younghusband expedition*: in 1902 Sir Francis Younghusband led an expedition to Tibet, penetrated to the heart of the country, and succeeded in establishing friendly relations between the British Government and the Dalai Lama.
  - 1. 21. *Asia Magna*: that part of Asia beyond the Euphrates.
  - }. 164, l. 5. *Lord Beaverbrook was in search of new writers*: i.e. for the newspapers in which he had the controlling interest, chief amongst them the "Daily Express" and the "Evening Standard."
  - 1. 27. *Lord Beaverbrook's Empire Free Trade campaign*: a campaign conducted by Lord Beaverbrook for establishing free trade between members of the British Commonwealth of Nations, with corresponding tariff walls against imports from foreign countries.
  - P. 165, l. 15. *A sahib*: a nobleman; a title applied in India to anyone holding a position of authority, but often also used as a courtesy title, as Sir, Madam, and Esquire are in English.
  - 1. 34. *Miss Tilly Losch*: celebrated ballet dancer.
  - P. 166, l. 36. *A wagon-lit*: a sleeping-compartment on a train.
  - P. 167, l. 8. *Cuspidors*: bowls provided for the convenience of passengers who are "air-sick."
  - 1. 18. *Le Bourget*: the aerodrome for Paris.
  - 1. 36. *The Kunsthalle*: Art Gallery.
  - P. 168, l. 3. *El Greco's Laocoön*: Laocoön was the Trojan priest who tried to dissuade his countrymen from bringing the wooden horse into the city. He was killed by a sea-serpent, who coiled round him and his two sons and destroyed them as they were preparing to sacrifice a bull to Poseidon (or Neptune). His death has been the subject of several works of art, including a painting by Domenico (or Dominico) Theotocopuli (1548-1625), a painter of the Spanish School, commonly called El Greco on account of his Greek parentage.
  - 1. 10. *His fellow-citizen Böcklin*: Arnold Böcklin (1827-1901), painter of landscapes and historical subjects, was a native of Basle.
  - 1. 30. *Società, etc.*: The Aerial Navigation Company, Ltd. (Italian).
  - P. 169, l. 3. *Luna Park*: a well-known pleasure-ground at Blackpool.
  - 1. 29. *Salami*: highly seasoned Italian sausages.

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- P. 170, l. 7. *Mussolini* : Benito Mussolini, Fascist dictator of Italy from 1922 to 1943.
- l. 18. *Lucullus* : Roman general, died c. 57 B.C. When he was superseded in his command by Pompey he retired to Rome to live a life of luxury and magnificence.
- l. 19. *Sejanus, Minister to Tiberius* : during Tiberius's absence from Rome his minister Sejanus took affairs into his own hands and plotted to gain control of the city and supplant his master ; but Tiberius discovered his design and had him murdered.
- P. 171, l. 8. *Pegasus* : the winged horse which, according to tradition, sprang from the blood of Medusa when her head was struck off by Perseus.
- l. 22. *Above us, the lion of St. Mark spoke of Venice* : See page 55 and note on page 200.
- l. 33. "*All Quiet on the Western Front*" : a translation of a novel on the Great War of 1914-1918 by the German writer Erique Maria Remarque. It tells in starkly realistic fashion the story of the war, with all its horrors and squalor, as experienced by a German soldier. It contains a good deal of coarse language and unsavoury incidents, and on its publication it was widely read and much discussed.
- P. 172, l. 3. *Corfu had once been British* : In 1815, after the fall of Napoleon, it was ceded to Britain. In 1864, at the wish of the inhabitants, Britain transferred it to Greece.
- ll. 5-6. *A similar restoration of Cyprus from the Labour Government* : There was a Labour Government in power in England at the time the author undertook his journey.
- l. 13. *The Empress Elizabeth of Austria* : Elizabeth (1837-1898), Consort of the Emperor Francis Joseph of Austria. She built a palace in the Greek style at Achilleion in Corfu, her favourite place of resort, which later came into the possession of the Emperor William II of Germany.
- l. 17. *Byron's death-place* : The English poet Lord Byron died at Missolonghi, in Greece, in 1824 as the result of a fever. He had gone to fight for the Greeks in their war to achieve independence from the Turks.
- P. 174, l. 2. *The Acropolis* : a steep rock in the midst of the city of Athens.  
*Lykabettus* : a conical-peaked mountain, now called the Hill of St. George, just to the north-east of Athens.
- P. 176, l. 32. *The Dodecanese* : a group of islands in the

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- Mediterranean off Asia Minor and just north of the island of Rhodes.
- 177, l. 16. *The Fascist salute* : As the ruling power was Italy, at that time under the Fascist government of Mussolini, the Arabs gave the Fascist salute, done by extending the right arm to its full length so that it points slightly upwards from the shoulder.
- 178, l. 22. *William Gerhardt* : contemporary English novelist, critic, and biographer (b. 1895).
- 179, l. 7. *King Fuad* : the King of Egypt at the time.
1. 17. *E. M. Forster* : well-known contemporary English novelist.
- 180, l. 32. *During the war* : i.e. the war of 1914-1918.
- 181, ll. 29-31. *Samson . . . snatched away the town-gates* : See Judges xvi. 3.
- 182, l. 27. *Brother of Sir John* : In June 1919 Sir John Alcock and Lieutenant A. W. Brown set up a record by flying non-stop from St. John's (Newfoundland) to Clifden (Ireland) in 16 hours 12 minutes.
- 186, l. 9. *Wogs* : a colloquial or slang word to denote coloured people who have adopted English dress and customs. Cf. *gollywog*.
1. 15. *Bedouins* : nomadic Arab tribes.  
1880 *moustaches* : long, drooping moustaches.
1. 23. *gigolos* : professional dancing partners. The word often carries a suggestion that they are of questionable moral character.
1. 25. *Colonel T. E. Lawrence* : better known as "Lawrence of Arabia," owing to his exploits in that country during the war of 1914-1918. At one time the portrait of him dressed as an Arab sheik, or chieftain, was well known.
- P. 187, l. 13. *Houris* : beautiful women who were supposed to inhabit the Mohammedan Paradise to comfort and sooth the spirits of the departed.
- ll. 35-36. *The Arch of Chosroes at Ctesiphon* : Chosroes, King of Parthia, came into conflict with the Emperor Trajan in 114. He was besieged by Trajan at Ctesiphon in the basin of the Tigris and finally had to flee.
- P. 189, l. 11. *Pliny* : Roman soldier and writer, who died at the age of fifty-six in the eruption of Vesuvius which destroyed Pompeii and Herculaneum.
1. 24. *Hadji Williamson* : "Hadji" is a title of respect given by Moslems to those who have made the pilgrimage to Mecca, the ambition of all pious Mohammedans.
- ll. 35-36. *Sir Thomas Herbert, visiting the place in the early*

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*seventeenth century* : a traveller and historian who lived from 1606 to 1682. He published an account of a journey he made to Persia.

- P. 191, l. 36. *Sari* : the long scarf-like drapery, the chief outer garment worn by Indian women.
- P. 192, l. 24. *August the Fourth* : anniversary of the declaration of war on Germany by England in 1914.
- P. 193, ll. 20-21. *An old slave dhow* : an ancient sailing-boat, used around the East African and West Indian coasts in connection with the slave trade.

## EXERCISES

### *Tramping in America*

1. If you were asked to comment on Davies's style, to what characteristics, good and bad, would you call attention?
2. Write in your own words a character sketch of Brum.
3. What criticisms of England and the English do you find either stated or implied) in this extract?
4. Write a brief essay on Davies's humour as revealed in this passage, quoting or giving precise references where possible.
5. "The Autobiography of a Super-Tramp" is a book which flouts all accepted moral standards." How far do you think this is a justifiable description of the book, judged on the extract here given?

### *To the West Riding*

1. What are the main differences of style that you notice between this extract by Priestley and the previous one by Davies?
2. Take the first paragraph of this extract as a model and write an essay upon the menace of careless cyclists.
3. "By the time we can travel four hundred miles an hour . . . there will be movement, but, strictly speaking, no more travel." Develop this theme in the form of a short essay, making clear the distinction between travel and movement.
4. Give an account, in your own words, of the Bradford that Priestley knew as a boy and the changes that have taken place in the town since those days.
5. What impression of the Yorkshire folk do you get from this passage?

### *The Last Fling*

1. Consider paragraph 4 on page 39 ("Hitherto my imagination . . . is not necessarily to excel"). Write an essay in support of or refuting the theme of this paragraph.
2. Pick out from this extract three or four passages of vivid and picturesque description.
3. Write an appreciation (or criticism) of the description of the thunderstorm (pp. 45-49).
4. Taking as a basis the observations given at the head of the notes on page 198, and adding any others of your own, write an essay on the main characteristics of Peter Fleming as a travel writer. Give specific references to this extract.

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### *Venice*

1. In paragraph 2 on page 54 Louis Untermeyer makes an implied criticism of the way in which language has been debased by advertising and by the cinema. Express your views on this subject at greater length, giving other examples and dealing with other aspects of it.

2. The writer speaks of Venice's "fall from glory." Show how this phrase epitomises the impression of the city that his sketch seeks to convey.

3. Paragraph 2 on page 55 touches upon the subject of emblems. Write an essay upon emblems in ancient and modern times.

### *The Nomads' Road to Kabul*

1. One of the characteristics of this passage is the use of quaint, striking, or eccentric phrases, often with a humorous effect. Make a list of these.

2. On page 67 Rosita Forbes comments on "the sharp insistence on change where for thousands of years men have dwelt too near the earth to need anything else." Show how this element of change is brought out in the rest of the extract.

3. What poetic touches can you discern in this passage?

4. Give, in your own words, a description of Kabul and the country immediately surrounding it.

5. Have you enjoyed reading this piece? If so, what characteristics give it its attraction; if not, what is it that makes you dislike it? Present your answer in the form of a brief essay.

### *High Days and Holidays in the Soviet Union*

1. "Once one has been able to get through the thin outer shell of bureaucracy to the human Russian underneath, one finds him to be a very friendly and likeable fellow." What evidence of this do you find in the passage?

2. What impression of Moscow and the Muscovites do we gain from this extract?

3. Every now and then one comes across some rather surprising, if small, detail in this passage. Make a list of those which you have found most surprising or unexpected.

### *Trans-Siberian Express*

1. What is the impression of travel on the Trans-Siberian Railway that this passage has left upon you?

2. A reviewer of the book from which this extract is taken remarked of it, "Not the least of the writer's qualities is his

## EXERCISES

capacity for extracting humour or amusement from a very ordinary or prosaic situation." Discuss.

3. "Everyone is romantic, though in some the romanticism is of a perverted and paradoxical kind" (p. 93). Develop this theme and give your views upon it.

4. What differences do you find between the style, general method, etc., of this passage and of the preceding one from "I Worked in a Soviet Factory"? To what do you attribute these differences?

### *Chang and the Chinese*

1. Give a character sketch of the Chinese servant Chang.

2. In what respects, according to the writer, do the national traits of the Chinese differ from those of the Japanese?

3. Summarise the opinions regarding servants expressed on pages 111-112. Do you agree with them or not? Give your answer in the form of an essay.

4. Write a "review" of this extract, commenting on the chief features of Sir Osbert Sitwell's style, his method of treating his subject, etc.

### *Nazareth*

1. Make a list of the things mentioned in this passage which call up associations with Jesus and the Gospels.

2. What effect does the reading of this extract produce? How is this achieved?

3. If you have access to a copy of Kinglake's "Eothen" and H. V. Morton's "In the Steps of the Master," read the sections dealing with Nazareth in these works, then compare and contrast the treatment of the subject by these two writers with that by Powys.

### *Leviathan*

1. Give a description of the whaling station and the operation of "flensing."

2. Write brief character sketches of Hansen, Fritz, and Hartvig.

3. What do you consider the chief merits and defects of this passage as a piece of narrative-cum-descriptive writing?

### *To the Barrier*

1. By what means does the writer hold our interest throughout this passage?

2. "A sense of humour, together with real 'grit' carried them through difficulties which otherwise might have seemed insurmountable." So wrote a reviewer of this book. How far is the assertion borne out in this extract?



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3. Tell in your own words how "Discovery II" "won through."

### *By Air to Tibet*

1. What characteristics of the author's style have impressed you most in this passage?

2. In his foreword to the book from which this is taken Robert Byron declared that he travelled "in search of both instruction and improvement . . . to know, in the language of my own senses, in whom and what the world consists." Do you think that the method of seeing the world that he adopted was best calculated to achieve this end?

3. What opinions of the author's character and personality do you form from this extract?

### *General Questions*

1. Write a review of this book, saying what you like and what you dislike about it.

2. A recent writer on travel literature asked the question, "What is the particular kind of enjoyment afforded by the reading of travel books which is responsible for the steady and enormous demand for them on the part of the public?" What answer would you give to this question so far as modern travel books are concerned? Illustrate and substantiate your points wherever possible by reference to the selections in this volume.

3. What are the chief differences between a mere travel book and a travel book that is literature? Illustrate from the present volume and from any other travel books you have read.

4. "The reader of travel books is the supreme escapist." Discuss.

5. Take in turn each of the extracts given in this book and answer quite briefly the following questions upon it:

(a) What was the motive behind the journey, or the purpose of it?

(b) Does this motive or purpose affect in any way the kind of things the author writes about or the manner in which he treats his subject?

6. Suppose you were asked to compile a list of a dozen travel books (ancient or modern) from which extracts could be taken to make an interesting anthology, what books would you suggest? Exclude works used for the present selection.

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